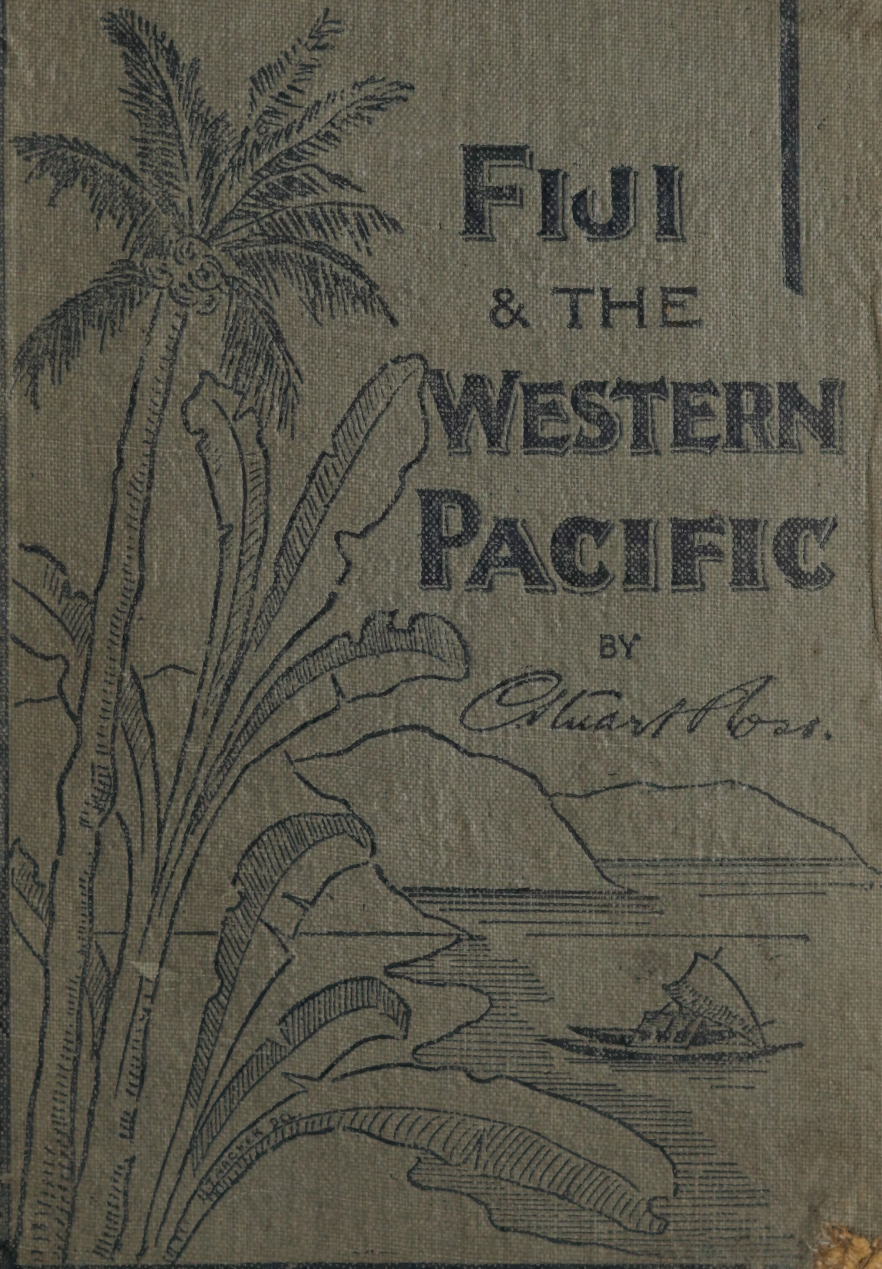
FIJI & THE WESTERN PACIFIC

BY

Charles Ross.



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SIR JOHN BATES THURSTON, K.C.M.G., &c.

FIJI

AND THE

Western Pacific.

BY

C. STUART ROSS,

Author of

"Churches and Church Workers in Fiji,"

&c.

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD STANMORE,

FIRST GOVERNOR OF FIJI,

AN

ABLE AND VIGOROUS ADMINISTRATOR,

AND THE

CHAMPION AND FRIEND

OF THE

NATIVE RACE,

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following work is largely the outcome of a suggestion made to me by the late Sir John Thurston, K.C.M.G., &c., on his return to his seat of government from his latest visit to England, whither he had gone mainly for reasons of health. He found everywhere in the home-land a deep interest manifested in the affairs of his Colony; numerous inquiries were made of him on the subjects of land legislation and labour conditions, the fertility of the soil and the products of the country.

Much of the information embodied in the following pages was received either from himself personally, or from official documents which he kindly placed at my service just before his lamented death.

From his pen I hoped to receive an authoritative exposition of the Native Policy, which has all along been so strenuously resisted by a large and

influential section of the white community. That, I felt, would be a distinct gain to the book, and would stamp it with a value all its own. But the sudden and unexpected close of his life made the accomplishment of such a task impossible.

To His Excellency Sir William Macgregor, His Excellency Sir Geo. R. Le Hunte, the Honourable Dr. B. Glanvill Corney, I.S.O., M.L.C., and all others who have courteously replied to my inquiries and rendered kindly service in the preparation of this work, I take this opportunity of thankfully acknowledging my obligations.

C. STUART ROSS.

DARLINGTON, VICTORIA,
27TH AUGUST, 1909.

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CHAPTER I.

On the lone Island of Rotuma.

JOHN BATES THURSTON was born in England on the 31st January, 1836. Declining an offer from his relative, Sir Augustus West, to smooth his way to the medical profession, he made interest with a firm of shipowners, to whom he was related, to be placed as apprentice in one of their fleet. When he was a boy of about fifteen he made his first voyage on an Indian liner, engaged to carry troops to the East. He then sailed for Australia, and arrived, in 1853, at Sydney, where, prostrated by a severe illness, he was compelled to leave his ship, and remain in that city under medical care.

At that period our Australian ports were crowded with shipping, and as officers and crews gaily broke articles and vanished to the gold-fields, young Thurston had no difficulty on his recovery in securing an appointment as officer of a ship bound for London. Through his family influence he was soon remuneratively placed in his

chosen profession. At Mauritius, where he made some stay, he had ample scope for the cultivation of his taste for botanical research, which gave such a charm to his life, and became such an important factor in the commercial development and progress of the Colony which ultimately became his home.

From Mauritius he went to New Zealand, where he arrived in the winter of 1862, and coasted down South as far as Dunedin, which he found socially convulsed, and all the economic relations of the people seriously disturbed by the recent discoveries of gold. Rigorous as that winter was, with intense frosts and Waihola lake frozen from bank to bank, Mr. Thurston keenly enjoyed his visit, and, long years afterwards, wrote to me of the pleasant impressions which it left upon his mind.

In 1863 he arrived at Rotuma in the schooner "Star of Eve," which was visiting the islands of the Western Pacific in the interests of trade. He had taken his passage in the schooner to gratify an eager desire which had long haunted him to visit those sunny lands of the South Pacific. It was largely a pleasure trip on which he had embarked, in which he kept in view the enlargement of his practical knowledge of botany—a study that kindled in him a sort of passion.

But that voyage had issues that gave a new trend to his whole life. When the ship was lying off Rotuma, where there is no anchorage, Mr. Thurston induced Captain Hovell to delay his departure for some time to enable him to complete a collection of plants which he wished to get on board. The Captain good-naturedly complied, and while the enthusiast was adding to his treasures, the breeze suddenly stiffened into a gale, the vessel dragged her anchors, and became a total wreck.

Rotuma lies alone in mid-ocean about three hundred miles by direct route north of Viti Levu. One of the fairest and most interesting of the Pacific islands, it is of small area, being about twelve miles in length, with a varying breadth of from two to five miles. There is a girdle of coral reef with occasional breaks in it, through which boats may reach the shore, and lying off its coast there are rocky islets scarred and worn into rugged and fantastic forms. But there is no harbour, and no flowing water on the land. Of volcanic origin, its three peaks show boldly from the sea ; the lips of one of the craters, which are clearly marked, are fringed with trees of a growth which indicates that there have been no eruptions in recent times. Among the scoriae and ashes which abound on the island there is found a wonderfully rich and productive soil, in which the cocoa-palm and other trees of commercial value make luxuriant growth,

and flowers of rare beauty give rich glow of colour to its rugged slopes.

The native gardens occupy the centre of the island, and are enclosed within a stone wall, erected at some remote period beyond the date of authentic history. It is about five feet high, and is known as the Great Wall of Rotuma. Subsequent to annexation to Fiji, in 1880, a new wall was built outside the other, the intervening space being used by the natives as a run for their stock. The villages occupy sites along the coast.

The Rotumans, who numbered about 3000, are quite distinct from the Fijians in race, language, and social organization. They are of a lighter complexion than the other Polynesians, somewhat smaller in stature than the Fijians, possessed of a higher average of intelligence than is to be found in any other people of the Western Pacific, and free from the turbulence, animosities, and passion for strife by which some of these are characterized. They have had abundant opportunities of intercourse with whalers, and make expert seamen, being in great demand for that special work. In contrast with Fijian customs the land is held by the natives individually, and not collectively, while the proprietary rights of women are distinctly recognized.

These people, who had come under the influence of Christian teaching, gave generous hospitality to the shipwrecked party during the period of their stay among them, and when, soon after, the Mission brig, "John Wesley," touched at the island, she took the hapless passenger and castaway crew on to Fiji.

For some time Mr. Thurston served as mate on the Mission schooner "Dove," and made splendid use of the opportunities thus afforded him to lay the foundation of that peerless knowledge of the islands of the Pacific, which was one of his best equipments for the important part which he was destined to play in the development on sound lines of Imperial interests.

Captain Jones, R.N., was at that time British Consul at Levuka. Mr. Thurston was brought into close friendly relations with him, and when dining with him on one occasion the talk turned on old days in other lands. The Consul's guest was an interesting raconteur, and while relating an incident that occurred at a shooting party at which he was present, Captain Jones, with eagerly quickened interest, cried, "Why, Thurston, I was there"; and then, on comparing notes, the conviction grew that they had sailed together in the same troopship to India. Mr. Jones, who then held the rank of ensign, was a passenger in the East Indiaman

in which Thurston was a sort of cadet. The consul was delighted to meet his old acquaintance, thus seated at his board by disaster of the sea, and offered, if he would become his guest and coach himself in the duties of the office, to recommend him to Lord Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby) for an appointment in the consular service. Mr. Thurston gladly availed himself of the friendly offer and became one of the consular staff at Levuka.

In 1865, the interior of Viti Levu, the largest island of the group, was absolutely unknown to Europeans. None up to that time had been adventurous enough to penetrate its rugged heights and come face to face with the fierce tribes with which they swarmed. The consul, smitten with a desire to see the country and to gain some knowledge of its inhabitants, arranged an expedition which none but intrepid men would venture to join. In company with Mr. Thurston he crossed to Suva, where they slept the first night near the old fortified native town. Some of the tribes were at open feud, and the mountains were overrun by savage foes. In consequence of the fighting that was going on they found it very hard to procure a guide. At length the chief, Tamavua, came to the rescue, and gave them an old woman, some seventy years of age, who piloted them through the mountain towns, and brought them safely back to the coast. They were the first Europeans who crossed

the high country and reached the Waimanu and the Waidina rivers on the other side. To them, first of all men from other lands, were revealed the lofty heights and deep valleys, the crags, cascades and purling brooks, that give variety and picturesqueness of tropical beauty to the interior of Viti Levu.

CHAPTER II.

In the Consulate at Levuka.

A FEW adventurous whites, apart from Mission agents, had established themselves on some of the islands, and were driving a growing trade in tropical products. Combination for mutual protection against native attacks was early forced upon them. But Society in the fifties was in a very crude state, inorganic, and at a very rudimentary stage of politics. It has been hurled as a reproach against the Colony that its white pioneers were of the worst possible type, lawless, and turbulent, and steeped to the lips in all iniquity. But that is simply a reckless exaggeration and travesty of facts. No doubt men of worthless character found their way to the islands, fugitives from justice and others who sought an asylum beyond the outposts of civilization; but men of the same class, bankrupt of principle, were numerous enough in the early days of Australia and New Zealand. The great body of Europeans in Fiji, numbering about two hundred, and scattered

throughout the group, were men of undoubted grit and force of character, and true to the best traditions of Britain. They had been attracted principally from these Australian colonies, and had settled down on the various islands either as planters or traders, and, though removed from all restraints of law and authority, yet there was a marked absence of petty offences, and few crimes of a graver character.

Events occurred, however, at times, which accentuated the need of a strong and stable ruling power for the repression of social disorders and for the rigorous quelling of native riots. The Europeans therefore met together in conference, and formulated a scheme of government according to which the great chief, Thakombau, the Vuni Valu, or Root of War (as his people called him), was recognized as Tui Viti, and clothed with fitting symbols of royalty. But it did not work well. Thakombau was greatly irked by cares of government. He had to deal not only with refractory whites and rebellious native tribes, but also with unruly Tongans, who, under their powerful chief, Maafu, made harassing exactions upon him. And, as Tui Viti, he had become liable for payment of a claim for £9000, for which he was now pressed by an agent of the Government of the United States. He therefore, in 1859, offered the Sovereignty of his Country to the British Crown. But the offer was hampered with

conditions, and the annexation of new territory was opposed to the Imperial policy of the day. The gift was therefore courteously but firmly declined. Things then drifted on in the old way. Constitutions were framed and wrecked in the practical working, and the wiser men of the community were wondering whether out of the chaos order and stability would ever emerge.

Mr. Thurston, meanwhile, always watchful of passing events, displayed in his new office abilities of no ordinary kind. He made it clear that he was not merely fitted to discharge the routine functions of a clerk, but that he was quite equal to the performance of higher and more onerous duties which called for the exercise of practical wisdom, sound judgment, and tact in the equitable adjustment of varying and conflicting interests. Captain Jones soon after resigned his appointment and returned to England, leaving Mr. Thurston as Acting Consul for Fiji and the Friendly Islands. The experience gained in this new position of responsibility which opened to him was of great value to him. Not only did he win the respect and confidence of the public by his courteous manner, good sense and thorough business habits, and by the wise and firm attitude which he assumed on occasion of the public disorders which sometimes agitated Levuka, but he also secured the confidence and approval of the Home authorities by the

marked ability of his despatches, which attracted special attention at the Colonial Office. He would willingly have accepted the office of Consul, but the time for his promotion had not yet come. Though Captain Jones used all his influence in his favour, yet the appointment was given to Mr. March ; and Mr. Thurston retired with dignity and honour from the position which he had so worthily filled.

On the occasion of his retirement, 30th November, 1869, the citizens of Levuka presented him with the following address :—"We beg to assure you that the faithful performance of all your official duties has won our highest esteem. You have done your utmost to advance the real welfare of British subjects, and you have been also the faithful guardian of native rights. You have had most important and difficult matters to deal with during the term of your office, and we are glad to know that the ability and impartiality which have marked your performance of duty have won for you that which you have well deserved—the approval of Her British Majesty's Government."

One of the last official acts of Mr. Thurston as Acting-Consul, was to despatch to the British Government a memorial signed by Thakombau and other chiefs, and by one hundred and twenty white residents in Fiji, asking for "British protection for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, in order that, since

annexation is opposed to the policy of H.M. Government, the native chiefs, with the assistance of competent foreign residents, may be permitted and assisted to cultivate a form of government analogous to that of the Sandwich Islands."

In May following, Mr. Thurston settled in Taviuni as a cotton planter. He took up land near Wairiki, and devoted himself to the culture of what was then the staple product of Fiji. But the results were not satisfactory from a financial point of view. In common with other planters he felt the evil times that fell with chilling effect upon that interest. But the period of retirement was not lost to him. It was gainful of experiences which he turned to good account in after times ; and it gave him opportunity to come into close friendly relations with Tui Thakau, whose wise political adviser he now became. The old chief had a young son, a bright, lithe youth of frank countenance and noble carriage, to whom Mr. Thurston, who had no family of his own at that time, felt himself strongly drawn ; and he took him with his father's entire approval and educated him as his own child, sparing neither expense nor pains to qualify him for the high position which he was afterwards to fill ; and Ratu La La repaid his benefactor with an affection and tenderness of devotion which awakened admiration in all who knew him.

CHAPTER III.

A Stormy Political Experience.

AS a step forward in the social advancement of the community, a Reading Room was now established at Levuka. There, on the 14th April, 1870, a public meeting was convened with the avowed object "to form a League or Society for the mutual protection of the life and property of the whites against the outrages committed by the natives." Throughout the group it was felt that vigorous action must be taken to check the aggressions of the native tribes. Certain schemes were laid on the table for consideration. These were remitted to an influential committee, and reported on to an adjourned meeting. On the third day, after an exhaustive dealing with the whole subject, a committee was appointed "to prepare the Constitution and Rules of the proposed Corporation of Fiji planters, to be submitted to a meeting of delegates from the various districts for consideration and adoption."

A few months later a further development took place in the direction of Municipal government. A public meeting was held to discuss "the best method of introducing measures for the public safety, sanitary arrangements, public roads, harbour lights, and other matters rendered necessary by the daily increasing population." The European settlers in Levuka now numbered about six hundred, with upwards of two thousand more who were engaged either in planting or in trading operations on the various islands of the group. There was also a growing volume of commerce, which affords splendid illustration of what British enterprise and pluck can achieve even in the most adverse circumstances. In the year 1865 the total exports from the Islands were of the value of £23,275. Of that sum cotton represented £9200, and cocoanut oil £11,000. There was a steady increase until 1869, when they were set down at £57,020. The value of cotton exported in that year amounted to £45,000. This gave a fillip to the trade that had quite unexpected issues, both commercially and politically. "A great influx of people set in," Mr. Thurston said, "whose combined efforts resulted first, in the cultivation of a large area of cotton which ruined nearly everybody connected with it ; and secondly, in the establishment of a state of things that went within an ace of ruining the country itself."

At length, on 3rd November, 1870, the draft of the new Constitution Bill was read to a large meeting of the principal white people settled in Ovalau and the adjacent islands ; and, some weeks later, the Charter of a Corporation for Levuka was signed by Thakombau. Things now looked brighter, and men hoped that in the near future a vigorous administration would be established. Meanwhile, seeing that there were laws but no means of enforcing penalties, the settlement of cases in dispute by arbitration was resorted to with fairly good results.

Writs were issued for the election of delegates, who met on 9th August, 1871. The King's ministers met the representatives of the people, to whom the draft Bill was submitted, and by whom its provisions were intelligently discussed during a session which lasted nine days, and resulted in the adoption of a constitution for the Kingdom of Fiji.

It seemed clear enough, however, from the outset, that it would meet with strenuous opposition from certain quarters. It ran the gauntlet of fiery criticism from hostile whites ; and the Government found that it could count neither upon their sympathy nor upon their moral support. It adopted a vigorous policy, however, in punishing native outrages on the settlers.

Punitive expeditions were sent against the Kai Tholo town of Natugerre and against the people of Ba, which taught the rebellious tribes a wholesome lesson, and reduced them to submission. But the ministry became unpopular; public opinion set in dead against them; they were called to account by their constituencies, and their resignations imperatively demanded.

But with all the political disquiet that prevailed, Levuka showed signs of substantial progress. The first meeting of the Municipal Council was held on 8th January, 1872. A few weeks subsequently a Chamber of Commerce was opened; a movement for the establishment of a Hospital was also initiated, and the Levuka Club was rented temporarily to serve the purpose of such an institution. A Masonic Lodge was consecrated in September, 1872. A Planters' Association, a Temperance League, and a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association were all successfully inaugurated before the close of that year.

Fiji wanted in those days a strong man at the helm of State, one who was possessed of daring, of indomitable energy, of tact, skill and self-reliance, and, above all, of acknowledged personal integrity, to guide the ship through shoals and breakers into a haven of peace and security. The friends of law and order therefore turned their

eyes to Mr. J. B. Thurston, who, like Cincinnatus, had turned aside from official life to the rural quietude of agriculture, and they induced him to leave his cotton-planting for the more stirring sphere of politics. He was elected, and took his seat in Parliament as Member for Wairiki, having as colleague Mr. James McConnell, of Vuna. Mr. Thurston joined the Cabinet as Chief Secretary and Minister of Foreign Relations, and at once took a leading position as one of the best-informed and ablest debaters in the House. His accession to place and power gave universal satisfaction, and was accepted as a happy augury that brighter days were now about to dawn on the hapless Colony.

Great things were expected of him. His inflexible resolution and thorough integrity were widely recognized; he was fearless and indefatigable in the performance of public duty; he possessed the confidence of Thakombau and all his chiefs; none had a more intimate knowledge of native character and larger acquaintance with native customs and traditions than he. South Pacific people and polity were subjects with which he was entirely conversant, and it was generally believed that of all men he was the one best fitted to deal with the political crisis which was felt to be fast approaching. The unruly spirits of the Colony who chafed under authoritative control

soon found that this new leader had an iron will and that he was as astute and far-seeing as he was unflinching in carrying out his deliberately formed plans.

This period of Mr. Thurston's life he regarded as the most disturbed and tempestuous of all. He now passed through an exceptionally stormy experience which tested all the heroic qualities of his nature. But his courage and patience, and remarkable coolness and self-control, combined with his knowledge of men, brought him triumphantly through it, and commanded the respect of even his political adversaries.

He initiated legislation to facilitate the administration of justice, and to secure to Fijians and to Polynesians alike, when accused of criminal offences, the advantage of being defended by suitable counsel. While full of sympathy with the native race, and always eager to promote their interests, he yet made swift and rigorous reprisals upon them when, in their fanatical outbreaks, they swooped down from their rocky fastnesses to slay and plunder the defenceless whites. A few settlers who had pushed back on to the rich lands near the mountains, which in the Ba district trend towards the coast, had been hunted from their holdings and one of them killed. A formidable force consisting of six hundred troops—all natives, except three

volunteers and four white officers—under Ratu Isekeli, was immediately despatched to the disaffected district; and though opposed by five times their number, yet they took by assault the town of Korowaiwai, and left 150 of the enemy dead upon the field. Another outbreak on the Upper Rewa, resulting in the death of many settlers, was also sternly and summarily suppressed. It was thus that Mr. Thurston made the British power respected and stamped out rebellion among the native tribes.

CHAPTER IV.

Political Strifes closed by Session to the British Crown.

THE Government made strenuous and honest endeavours to advance the best interests of both races with whom it had to deal, but it was fronted with difficulties of a serious kind. An adverse party of whites opposed every measure it tried to enforce. At last, towards the close of the year 1873, the disaffection rose to a head. The arm of authority seemed to be paralysed, and the shadow of bankruptcy haunted the Government. The white settlers refused either to recognize its mandate, or to pay the taxes at which they were assessed. When an attempt was made to enforce its claims the people rose in open rebellion. Parliament was therefore dissolved and writs were issued for a new election. But the state of public opinion discouraged the Government from moving forward on the lines of the Constitution. It was believed that some of the settlers were prepared to take office in order to wreck it. A Proclamation

was therefore issued cancelling the writs, and the forecast of a new Constitution was published. One of its provisions—to poll the native vote—exasperated the whites, and created such an acute state of feeling among them, that a deputation of one hundred and fifty persons waited upon the king to protest against the unconstitutional action of his ministers. The European population were in a ferment, and a persistent cry was raised for annexation, either to Great Britain or to some other power. A section advocated a political connection with one of the Colonies of the Australasian group.

There seemed for a time to be a drift in the direction of anarchy. One man, openly flouting the law, took his goods forcibly out of bond. The Government took measures to vindicate its authority, when Captain Simpson, of the warship "Blanche," which was then lying in the harbour, interfered. He issued a Proclamation forbidding either party to resort to force. That was equivalent to denying the authority of the Government, and rendering it powerless against those who revolted from its rule. Mr. Thurston detected at once the egregious blunder which the commander of the warship had made, and with consummate dignity and a masterful tone he warned him that, on the first step he took to interfere with the action which the Government of Fiji intended to

adopt against those who openly infringed its laws, the ministry would at once surrender the rule of the Islands into his hand, the Government flag would be lowered, the troops and police would be dismissed, the courts and public offices would be closed, and the whole responsibility of maintaining order and security would be devolved upon him. At the same time he warned the officious commander that the authorities in doing all this would address a protest and remonstrance to the Governments of Germany and the United States, by whom they had been recognized as a Sovereign Power. This bold challenge brought Captain Simpson to terms. He withdrew his Proclamation and agreed to aid the authorities in the maintenance of law and order.

At the close of the year a new Constitution was inaugurated. It had popular provisions which commended it to the favour of the people, and it seemed for a while as if another political experiment were to be tried. But, wearied of all the turbulence and ceaseless contentions into which they had drifted, the old king persuaded the other great chiefs to join him in craving anew the protection of the British Government ; and Mr. Thurston again addressed the Colonial office on the subject. The European settlers also, in the interests of their commerce and in order to the security of life and property, joined their cry to that of Thakombau

and his chiefs, and when the offer of these islands was laid again at the foot of the Throne, in the form of absolute and unconditional cession to the British Crown, a Commission—consisting of Commodore Goodenough and Consul Layard—was appointed to conduct negotiations, and to make such preliminary arrangements as the case demanded. Such was the confidence reposed in Mr. Thurston by Thakombau and the native chiefs, that they appointed him their representative in the whole transaction, persuaded that their interests would be perfectly safe in his hands. It fell within the duty of the Commission to elect an interim Government, of which Mr. Consul Layard was appointed Administrator; the office of Acting-Colonial Secretary being filled by Mr. J. B. Thurston.

The announcement of Mr. Thurston's appointment was received by some with an outburst of wild vindictiveness. A public meeting was convened at Levuka to voice the indignation of the malcontents, and a resolution was passed imperatively demanding his instant dismissal from office. The Commission, aware of the unworthy influences at work, treated the ungenerous communication with the fine scorn which it merited. With a curt intimation of grave disapproval, it promptly returned the resolution to those who sent

it, describing it as one that was "proposed by excited speakers to an excited assembly."

Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of New South Wales, by direction of the British Government, proceeded to Fiji, and formally accepted the cession of the Islands on the 10th October, 1874. It has been persistently stated that Mr. Thurston was the determined opponent of annexation. That, we have on his own authority, is not correct. So far from being opposed to it, he had ardently promoted it so far back as 1870. His opposition was not to annexation but simply to the conditions proposed in connection with it. He did not approve of these ; and, to use his own words, "As he could not get his own way, the matter dropped for the time. He wanted annexation in his own way, and that at last was brought about." In these negotiations his wide knowledge of Polynesia, and the vast influence which he exercised over the minds of the chiefs, as well as the boundless confidence in his honesty with which he had inspired them, made his services not only valuable, but absolutely indispensable. Had his counsels been followed, it is quite probable that the whole of the Western Pacific would have been under the British flag. His honourable ambition to occupy the highest place was known to the inner circle of his friends. With full consciousness of his own great capacity to hold the reins of power, to improve the con-

ditions and to develop the resources of the country, he aspired, as early as 1874, to be Governor of Fiji. That high office came later, and the distinguished success with which he acquitted himself of its important duties entirely justified the aspirations of earlier years.

Thus a little band of courageous Britons—keen, shrewd, hard-headed men—by enterprise and daring, by energy and force of will, rescued from confusion and anarchy, and made an integral part of the British Empire one of the fairest and most fertile groups of islands in all the broad expanse of the South Pacific.

CHAPTER V.

An Epidemic and its Tragedies.

BARELY three months had passed since the cession, the grave ceremonial with which the formal act was finally completed was still the theme of common talk, when a great national disaster befell the country, and filled the people with dismay and mourning. Thakombau, with two of his sons, had accepted an invitation from Sir Hercules Robinson to visit him in Sydney. It was like a new revelation to the old king to see the marks of industrial progress and the splendid triumphs of civilization of which that city could boast, and full of the wonders of the new land he sailed again for his own country in H.M.S. "Dido." But he carried back with him unwittingly the germs of a disease that swept like a pestilence through the land. His sons and two of his servants had been taken ill with a mild type of measles, and Thakombau himself had a slight attack of the same sickness at sea. When he landed at Levuka his people gathered around him with cordial welcome and carried away from contact

with him the fatal germs. A few days later Mr. Layard held a meeting on the Rewa, at which many of the chiefs from the mountain districts of Viti Levu were present, as well as people who had come from Levuka already unconsciously affected with the malady. The infection was thus carried by the chiefs to their respective districts, where it rapidly extended, and swept away large numbers of the people.

Some of the tribes who had recently accepted the Lotu, or Christian faith, naturally regarded the epidemic as a visitation upon them for their defection from the old religion, and, retreating to their mountain fastnesses, they dismissed their Christian teachers, returned to the worship of their fathers' gods, and openly renounced their loyalty to British rule.

The scourge passed from island to island, smiting down the people in appalling numbers. Graves multiplied with fearful rapidity around every town, and the villages on some of the islands were entirely emptied of their inhabitants. The sick when under no restraint plunged into the water. They refused to believe that bathing was no specific for their malady; the rash was thus thrown back, inflammation supervened, and delirium and death soon followed. I knew a humane planter on Viti Levu who, gathering some weeks' supply of

food and fuel into his house, locked himself and all his fevered labourers in, and there he tended them through all their sickness and delirium, ministering to their wants with a tender compassionateness. It was a heroic thing to do, which only those who have been in a house crowded with well-oiled Fijians, or Polynesians, can fully appreciate. His kindness and devotion were rewarded with the recovery of all his people, excepting one man who eluded his vigilance, and plunged into the sea before he could capture him.

I met two heathen boys from one of the mountain villages of Viti Levu. They looked dull and stolid enough, and barely a word beyond the briefest answer to a question asked dropped from their lips ; but when I spoke of measles to them the eyes kindled, the nostrils dilated, and the bare chests heaved with excitement ill suppressed, and, with an animation and rapidity of utterance which indicated the strength of emotion that lay behind, they described to me sufferings and scenes away up in their old mountain homes that were quite appalling. They were eye-witnesses of unspeakable tragedies ; and that the impression which they made upon their minds was a very deep one their earnest and excited manner sufficiently testified.

But one of the most lamentable things in connection with that visitation was the inhumanity that occasionally marked the conduct of the natives

towards their afflicted countrymen. Their better feeling seemed to become paralysed amid the prostrations and frequency of death around them. One planter told me that on several occasions he caught his people burying men alive ; in one case he found them carrying a man to his grave full fourteen hours before life was extinct. The fearful shock of the trial would seem to have flung them back for a while on the old abandoned practices of heathenism.

I had a curious illustration at Natewa Bay, in Vanua Levu, of the readiness with which the natives under the pressure of such a trial fell back upon the abandoned superstitions of the past. When the epidemic passed through that district it carried off about fifty teachers who were labouring in connection with the Wesleyan Mission. Christianity thereupon fell to a low ebb, and many of the natives, it was said, renounced the Lotu, and fell back, to some extent, into the old heathen modes of worship.

In the town of Koro Levu, at the head of the bay, two Fijian priests, who had long been discredited, emerged from the obscurity into which they had sunk with the progress of the Lotu, and tried to regain their old influence over the minds of the people. They persuaded about a hundred of them one day to allow themselves to be fastened within a house while they set fire to it from

without, assuring them, of course, that the fire would have no power to hurt them. The priests, prudently remaining outside, ignited the building, and naturally enough many of those who were within were seriously burned—some of them died from the injuries which they then received. It was Mr. Hamilton Hunter, I believe, the popular magistrate of Taviuni, who adjudicated on the case, and taught the offenders how the law deals with those who trifle with the lives of British subjects.

The number of those who perished in that visitation of the measles was roughly estimated at 40,000 persons—a full third of the whole population of the islands. But one of the keenest observers of those days, who had ample opportunity to acquaint himself with the facts, used to say he had ground to believe that not more than one-third of that number actually died from the sickness. The remaining two-thirds, he maintained, died in consequence of fright and intense depression of spirit. He pointed to the grave of one who had been a stalwart chief and had occupied a bed in the Levuka hospital. "He protested," he said, "he was ill, but the most careful diagnosis failed to disclose any symptoms of the sickness. No matter, he was dying. His father, wife and children had all died, and now he did not wish to live. So he died too."

CHAPTER VI.

The First Governor and his Difficulties.

ON 1st September, 1875, the Charter constituting the group a British Colony was proclaimed, and the first Governor under that Charter was sworn in. Fiji is a Crown Colony, the affairs of which are administered by the Governor and his Executive Council (consisting of the Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General and Receiver-General). There is a Legislative Council composed of the Chief Justice and other heads of departments, as official members, and an equal number of unofficial members nominated by the Governor and appointed by the Crown, who are supposed to represent the general community. The Governor, as President of the Council, commands the votes of all officials, excepting only that of the Chief Justice, who is permitted the exercise of an independent judgment.

The Legislative Council, under the new Constitution recently granted, consists of His Excellency the Governor and ten officials, six of whom are elected. The franchise qualifications are property of the value of £20 per annum, or income of £120.

The native members are selected by the Governor, and there are now no civil servant votes.

Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji, was acknowledged to be an able, energetic and accomplished man, of undoubted sincerity, and well qualified in many respects for the position which he was now called to fill. There was some disappointment that Commodore Goodenough had not been selected for the office, but the Colonists were prepared loyally to support Sir Arthur Gordon, who made a very favourable impression on them by an able and vigorous speech, which he delivered to a large number whom he invited to meet him at Nasova the day following his installation in office. He touched on that occasion briefly, but with tact and judgment, on questions of burning interest to the community, such as security of land tenure, cheap labour, the subsidizing of steamers to connect the scattered outlying islands of the group with the chief centre of trade and shipping in Fiji. The satisfactory settlement of these questions was of supreme importance to the future of the Colony. A week later he addressed the assembled chiefs at Bau, and indicated to them the principles that would guide him in his administration of the Government.

Determined efforts were made to disparage Mr. Thurston, whom his political foes still followed with acrimonious attacks. They presented a

memorial to Sir Arthur Gordon praying that Mr. Thurston should not be employed in the public service. Their action was based on the specious pretext of patriotism. But the disguise was too thin to deceive the astute penetration of the Governor. He knew the worth of the man they hated. He was aware of the splendid service he had rendered in the protracted negotiations connected with the cession of the Fiji Islands to the British Crown. He had full knowledge that, like himself, he had profound sympathy with inferior races and an intimate knowledge of their nature and habits, as well as a large practical experience in dealing with the native inhabitants of those islands which he himself had not ; and therefore he appointed him Auditor-General ; later, he succeeded Captain (now Sir Arthur) Havelock as Colonial Secretary.

When Sir Arthur Gordon assumed office the country was in a depressed condition. The natives had hardly recovered from the panic into which the epidemic of measles had thrown them, and the white settlers had fallen into a restless and despondent state. The advanced market price of cotton caused by the American Civil War had allured to the country a large number of people, who embarked in cotton growing with little capital and less knowledge of its successful cultivation. Falling markets followed the re-establishment of peace, and proved ruinous to many planters.

The difficulties of the Governor's position were accented by a native revolt. Some of the mountain tribes made a descent on Christian villages and feasted on the women whom they captured. The country was broken, rugged and difficult to traverse, and the Kai Tholos (as those highland tribes were named) entrenched themselves in caves which abounded in their native fastnesses. But the Governor acted with energy and resolution. For the maintenance of order he was compelled for financial reasons, to rely entirely upon the natives themselves, and through his sympathetic and tactful dealing with them, he so quickly won their confidence that they proved sufficient for all his needs. He now despatched against the revolted tribes his whole available native force. He further requisitioned the friendly chiefs to contribute for service in the field small bodies of their strongest and bravest men. The response which he received from all sides was very encouraging. Their picked warriors, greatly in excess of the number required, deployed before him at Nasova, and, after the custom of their country, boasted with inflated speech of the prowess they would show when the battle raged. They accomplished their work, however, well enough. The Kai Tholos were routed with heavy loss, and, broken and dispirited, they surrendered to the Colonial forces, which consisted of only natives under the leadership of a few

white officers. Eight hundred and forty eight prisoners were taken, some of whom were executed and the others distributed as labourers among the friendly tribes. This display of power and firmness had a good moral effect upon others who, if not actively and openly disaffected were disloyal at heart, but who now accepted the situation and applied their energies to the cultivation of their lands.

The Government now earnestly devoted its attention to matters of prime importance to the welfare of the Colony. It was felt that an indispensable condition of the development of the insular trade was swift and easy access to the Australian markets. Mr. Thurston therefore visited Sydney at the close of 1876, and arranged for a direct steam service from that port to Levuka.

There was another matter seriously affecting the interests of many planters to which the authorities gave their best attention. It was the settlement of land claims—a question that bristled with embarrassments on every side. The difficulty of dealing with these had indeed confronted the British Government from the outset, and had been one of the principal causes of the hesitation then evinced to accept the proffered cession of the Islands. A Commission was appointed to hear evidence and to issue titles if the claims were

allowed. It was not an unusual thing to have as many as five claimants striving to establish their right to one and the same block of land. It sometimes came out in evidence that chiefs had sold the same sections several times to different buyers. That was on one or two occasions bluntly acknowledged before the Commission. And there was no doubt the progress of the Colony had been greatly retarded by the difficulty of settling conflicting claims. In the early years of European settlement the fixing of boundaries was practically impossible, as there was hardly a surveyor to be got ; and sometimes it was extremely difficult to discover anywhere but on paper the location of grants of land which had been made. However, in the course of some years, the patient sifting of evidence and careful investigation of every claim, finally disposed of a mass of business which was felt to be particularly onerous and encumbered with perplexities of no ordinary kind ; and if the decisions were not always acceptable to individual claimants, yet, in the main, they were approved by the judgment of the public at large.

CHAPTER VII.

The Native Taxation Scheme.

ONE of the hardest problems that the Government had to face was to devise a scheme of native taxation that would be at once equitable and helpful to the revenue. Thakombau had provided revenue for the needs of the State by means of a poll tax of one pound per annum, imposed on all male adult natives. But it was not a success. It was the fertile source of many ills, and was the means of furnishing whether intentionally or not, penal labour to many of the planters, who advanced the money to the natives in return for contracts of service. Sir Hercules Robinson therefore imposed a labour tax in lieu of it. That, however, was encumbered with difficulties of a serious kind, and after very full and earnest consideration, and conference with the native chiefs, Mr. Thurston's Garden Scheme was adopted.

It was based on the communal system with which the natives were quite familiar. It was,

Mr. Thurston explained, a fundamental principle with them that the social unit was not the individual, as in European countries, but the family, and the laws under which the natives were for some time to be governed must of necessity recognize that principle. To overturn the primitive state of society which has existed for countless generations and enforce English ideas of the nineteenth century would be attended with grave disaster. A change in the customary laws or obligations of the Fijians must come about, Mr. Thurston believed, but the Government deemed it an imperative duty to ensure by every means in its power that the change shall be the result of evolution and not revolution.

Mr. Thurston's speech in the Legislative Council on the first reading of the Bill to regulate the assessment and collection of native taxes was an able and exhaustive one. "The Bill," he said, "has in fact a far larger scope, and will exercise a far greater effect than the raising of a given number of pounds, shillings and pence. With this question is involved the whole progress of the Colony. It means the division of provinces into districts, and districts into wards, the opening of roads and facilitation of general intercourse, the appointment of native ports and centres of trade, the preservation and increase of indigenous productions, the introduction of new sources of wealth, the

inculcation of intelligent and industrious habits, the better establishment of our native village communities, and in short, the general organization and progress of the 120,000 people who have so lately submitted themselves to the protection and rule of Her Majesty."

The amount of tax to be paid by each province estimated in pounds sterling, is annually assessed by the Legislative Council, the assessment being based as regards each province on mixed considerations of number of population, nature and productiveness of soil, and the degree of civilization which the province has attained.

The apportionment of the shares to be borne by each district in the province, and the selection of the article or articles of produce to be contributed are then made, nominally and according to law, by a Board appointed under the Ordinance, but practically by the Provincial Council, which consists of chiefs of districts, styled "Bulis," under the presidency of the Roko Tui, frequently, though not always, aided by the presence of the Governor's Commissioner.

The next stage is the apportionment of the tax of each district by the District Council, consisting of the town chiefs of the district under the presidency of the "Buli." By this body the share

of each several township in the district is determined. Lastly, the individual share of produce to be contributed or work done by each family in each village is settled by the town chief, aided by the elders of the township.

This machinery renders the natives themselves, to a very large extent, active and responsible agents in the collection of the revenue. Under this system the area of cultivation is rapidly increasing. The natives receive market value for their produce, and cash instead of barter. For tenders are invited for the purchase of the articles of produce in which the tax may be paid ; these are copra, cotton, candle nut, tobacco, maize, coffee, and sugar-cane for the mills.

In the year 1876 this source of revenue yielded £9,342 ; and in 1879 the receipts were set down at £22,500. The total assessment for 1892 was £19,240. After deducting the amount of the assessment from the contribution of each province, the balance is returned in cash to the natives in the form of surplus taxes, to be apportioned among the people in proportion to the assiduity of each village community. And as the natives contributed in that year produce to the value of about £30,000, the amount returned to them was upwards of £10,000. In the year 1899 the assessment was £19,740, and the refund to the native taxpayers

that year amounted to £18,694, as against an annual average of £8,344 for the previous decade.

So long as the Fijians are not stimulated to exertion by fear of poverty or desire for wealth—the common incentives to industry in civilized lands—compulsory work of some description is absolutely necessary for their national existence and well-being. The system of taxation in kind binds them to their lands, and furnishes them with no pretext for the desertion of their wives and families. A tax in money, on the other hand, would force many of them to leave their homes and encourage them to loiter about the European settlements. The general average of the assessment "per caput" of the males of the Colony is 13s. 10¾d. That it is not excessive is shown by the fact that, in connection with the system, the natives annually grow surplus produce to the value of from 50 to 100 per cent. over the amount of their assessment, which is refunded to them in coin; and also by the circumstance that the actual labour expended in producing this result does not exceed thirty full working days, or one-tenth of a native's time.

Mr. Thurston, who never wavered in his strenuous advocacy of this policy, used to say that when he distributed his first thirty bushels of maize to be sown in native gardens, he was laughed at,

and asked whether he ever expected to see a bushel of that maize grown? Three years later he practically answered the question by exporting thirty thousand bushels, and he could see no reason why the export should not be vastly in excess of that. The same thing applies to cotton, coffee, sugar and other products, which are successfully cultivated by native labour.

The tax is, in fact, a land tax of the 4,953,920 acres in the Colony. The natives own more than 4,500,000 acres, or an average of 42 acres a head, which, for the first time in the history of their race, they can enjoy without fear of molestation by an enemy. They pay no more than £4,000 a year in indirect taxation, while the annual cost of governing them alone exceeds £16,000 per annum.

What is claimed, and justly claimed, for the scheme is, not that it is absolutely perfect, not that it is intended to be continued for all time, but that until the natives bear a fair share of the burden of indirect taxation it is the best, and indeed the only workable system for making them contribute a share of the revenue proportionate to the cost of protecting them in the enjoyment of their lands. In the Message to the Legislative Council in the year 1904, the following passage occurs :—"For the last twenty years the native taxes have remained at about the same figure, although the native

population has unhappily decreased in that time by about 20 per cent. In the same period, too, the natives have learnt to use imported goods much more than formerly, and have thus increased their indirect contribution through the Customs, so that in spite of the largely increased expenditure on country hospitals and water supplies, and on other measures wholly in the native interests, I have felt it justifiable to relieve them of a portion of their direct tax."

That they pay this tax in produce rather than coin is due to the fact that, in all but the copra producing provinces—that is, in two-thirds of the group—the natives can earn money only by combining under Government supervision to grow sugar-cane, maize and cotton. Without such combination they would earn no money at all on their own lands.

CHAPTER VIII.

Hostility of Colonists to the Scheme.

THE Colonists generally were at issue with the promoters of the Native Taxation Scheme, which may be said to underlie the entire policy of the Government. Persistent opposition which rose at times to angry clamour, during many years was offered to it ; and that received support from the Australian press. Arguments were multiplied to show not only that it was disadvantageous to the best interests of the native race, but that the natives themselves were opposed to it as a cunning instrument devised to keep them in servitude and penury. The Chamber of Commerce and other public organizations, embracing men of public spirit and undoubted intelligence, repeatedly approached the Government with a view, if not to the abolition, at least to the modification of the scheme ; and urgent petitions embodying these views were sent year after year to the Secretary of State for the Colonies without producing any change of policy.

The agricultural industries of the Colony, in the early years, languished for want of labourers, and it was alleged that remunerative employment offered which the Fijians would have gladly accepted had they not been practically prohibited by the Taxation Scheme, which required them to devote their entire time, at least so much of it as was not absorbed in the service of the chief, to the production of their annual tax. The opponents of the scheme pointed to convictions before Ratu Tevita and others, of men charged with indolence in the sugar plantations and sentenced to hard labour on the roads. They also established proof of oppression and tyranny on the part of overseers who exacted their daily tasks even from those who were weak and ill. But if there were convictions that were bad at law, and if officials sometimes exhibited hardness or exceeded their powers, there was an effective remedy at hand. The scheme itself in its principle and beneficent effects could not be held responsible for the imperfections and faults of its administrators.

"The Government," Mr. Thurston informed me, "had no objections to the Fijians labouring in plantations within their own districts and their own provinces. They were encouraged to cultivate habits of industry. But if carried a hundred miles away their families were left to depend on others for food, the nuptial ties were often strained or

snapped, and when they returned after twelve months' absence, too late probably for the planting, then both they and those who were dependent on their labour had to be maintained at the expense of others. By going out of their provinces their recognized customs were broken up, and their social relations all deranged. The chiefs, for three years, had complained in their annual council of the withdrawal of able-bodied men from their districts. There had been expressions of strong disapproval of the moral laxity which that often entailed, and therefore the Government prohibited engagements for more than a month in what are called "home districts," and for more than twelve months elsewhere.

The stringency of the old law was relaxed by an Ordinance passed in 1896, permitting native contracts to be made for longer periods than a year, without which it would have been prohibitive, nay impossible, to enter into engagements with natives to grow bananas. Many hundreds of contracts have been entered into since that was passed. The provisions of the native Labour Law are stamped with political wisdom and equity, and are made in the best interests of the Fijian race.

The indirect tendency of the scheme is to maintain unbroken, so far as that may be possible, the old social relations of the tribes; it moves

exactly on the line of all their habits. In small or medium sized towns the natives have quite as much to do as will keep them fairly occupied all the year round. The houses, which are built by the community, are not serviceable for a longer period than four or five years. A great deal of labour is involved in the cultivation of native crops such as yams and taro. The ground is usually prepared annually, and a large area is required, as the return, on an average, is not more than five or six times the quantity put into the ground. The principal crops for food supply are, in a large number of districts, planted in accordance with ancient and immemorial usage on the communal system. Every Fijian has to contribute his share in erecting and maintaining the public buildings of his community—district schools, churches, houses for teachers, for the accommodation of strangers, and for the chiefs, for whom also there must be planted the requisite supply of food. Roads have to be made and kept clean, and the precincts of houses and towns weeded and swept. The Fijian knows no form of society except the community, and understands no authority except that of his chief. The communal system is, therefore, indispensable for them in their present state of social development, and the taxation scheme, which received for many years so much opprobrium and abuse, has its roots struck deep in that.

After personal observation extending over eight or nine years, Dr. (now Sir William) Macgregor declared, he honestly conceived that no plan of taxation could be put in practice which would yield so satisfactory results as the present scheme.

"The settled policy of the Government, which Sir John Thurston has done perhaps more than any other man to mould, secures for the native population the fullest possible amount of liberty and consideration, and safeguards them from European colonists." That is the clear and bold testimony of one whose high official position and intimate knowledge of the whole subject qualify him to speak with incontestable authority upon it.

CHAPTER IX.

The Labour Problem and its Solution.

AS the Fijian was virtually out of the labour market for reasons already explained, natives known as "foreign labour" were largely imported for domestic and plantation work from the islands of the New Hebrides and Solomon Groups. That traffic came to be associated with serious evils and irregularities which necessitated official intervention. The natives were sometimes taken forcibly away from their island homes; occasionally they were defrauded of their wages by unscrupulous planters. But stringent regulations were made by the Colonial Government for the prevention of such wrongs. Engagements were made under the direct supervision of an officer of the Government, who allowed no coercive measures to be resorted to in order to secure men, and no evasion of their obligations on the part of planters to those whom they employed.

In the year 1875 the labour supply of the Colony was in a lamentable condition. The importation from the islands had almost entirely

ceased, and the agreement to return time-expired labourers to their homes was no longer carried out. Thousands who were entitled to a free passage back to their own islands were detained at Fiji for want of means to return them, and were fast becoming, through their clamourous discontent, a source of danger to the community. The Governor felt the pinch of the situation and cast about for an explanation and remedy. He felt that the old recruiting grounds for some reason or other were fast failing him. There was no shadow of a reflection, he believed, to be cast upon the planters, in the main. Their treatment of the Polynesian immigrants, he was persuaded, had been all along "kind, considerate and equitable." He therefore concluded that the chief causes of the undeniable reluctance of Polynesians to engage for Fiji, was the dilatory and uncertain manner in which those whose terms of service had expired had been returned to their homes, and the small amount of remuneration given to the labourer in Fiji compared to what he could command in the sugar districts of Queensland. He therefore looked to India as the most hopeful source of labour supply for his Colony, believing, after careful inquiries and calculations made, that the coolie would be found to be considerably cheaper than the Polynesian.

Sir Arthur Gordon, with the energy that marked his movements, having come to a decision,

despatched Mr. Mitchell as Agent-General to Calcutta, to make all necessary arrangements to set in flow a stream of coolie immigration to Fiji, and, in order to keep the door open for supplies nearer home, he sent Mr. Leefe to the Line Islands to ascertain the cause of the drying up of that old source of help. The department of State that had control of this business was now galvanized into abnormal activity. Special efforts were made to remove all possible grounds of irritation and complaint. At the close of 1878 only thirty-two time-expired Polynesians remained in the Colony, and abundant labour was pouring in to satisfy every need. The following year a depot for coolie immigrants was erected at Yanutha Lailai, and it was announced that a large number of Indians were available for plantation work. Two thousand five hundred and thirty-four Polynesians, soon after that, were placed on the market and quickly absorbed.

On 14th May, 1879, the "Leonidas," the first ship chartered to convey coolies to Fiji, arrived off the Port of Levuka with 480 immigrants on board. She was saved from imminent loss by the skill and promptitude of Mr. Thurston, who, while watching her movements at an early hour in the morning, observed her drifting into a position of grave peril, and immediately went outside the reef in an open boat to guide her safely to her anchorage. On

approaching the vessel he was informed that there had been sickness on board, and the announcement of the presence of such serious maladies as cholera and small pox created a mild panic among the people on shore. Effective quarantine measures were therefore adopted, and stringently enforced until all danger of infection had passed.

The coolie scheme of Sir Arthur Gordon was received at first with scant favour by the public, and he got some hard hits for inaugurating this new departure in the policy of the country. But the event entirely justified the wisdom of his action, for in the Rewa district it was found that owing to the wet, cold climate that obtains there, the mortality among the Polynesians stood high, and that the more wiry and muscular Indian labourers were preferable and more profitable, even at £31 per head—the cost of introduction.

The growing prosperity of the Colony and the increasing area brought under cultivation, made larger demands on the labour supply. So clamant indeed was the need, that strenuous efforts were again made to have the stringency of the law relaxed that regulated the employment of Fijian labour. A deputation waited on the Governor, Sir William Des Voeux, in 1881, asking that, in the circumstances of the Colony, it should be suggested to the chiefs and Rokos that a proportion of the

young men of each district should be hired out for agricultural service. But the Governor, in close adhesion to the policy of his predecessor, replied that he was "opposed to the indenture of Fijians for long periods at a distance from their homes."

We find now no trace of friction or irritation between employers and the representatives of the Immigration Department. More cordial relations now exist on all sides. There is a growing conviction in the public mind that the Government is straining every nerve and bending every sinew to the task of establishing on a sound and permanent basis the prosperity of the Colony, and of binding together in a mutually recognized community of interest the two races, thus thrown side by side to work out co-operatively their own historical issues. There is an avowedly marked improvement in the tone of legislation affecting labour, and the department concerned with that branch of State business is administered in a manner that inspires the planters with confidence and hope for the future.

Although a limited supply of labour from New Hebrides was introduced as late as 1896, and perhaps later than that, yet Polynesia is now virtually abandoned as a recruiting ground for Fiji. The sugar growers find the coolies in all respects more suitable for plantation work than the South Sea Islanders, who, though not really

cheaper than the Indians, yet because they are more tractable and pleasant to work with, are generally preferred by small planters on cocoa-nut or fruit plantations.

The Indians now form an important element in the population of Fiji. Many of them remain in the Colony after the expiration of their term of service, and either open stores for the sale of such articles as their countrymen require, or cultivate patches of ground which they rent from the Government. Some of them in the Suva and Navua districts have extensive rice fields, and sold recently to the Suva Rice and Cotton Company about forty tons of rice, at about five pounds ten shillings per ton. That some of them are careful of their money is evidenced by the fact that, in 1894, 913 coolie immigrants deposited £19,914 19s. 6d. in the local banks. Of the whole Indian population in the Colony, about 19,000 are under indenture, and about 6,000 are engaged in agriculture or trade.

For the medical treatment of the Indian immigrants in Fiji ample provision is made in accordance with the requirements of the law.

CHAPTER X.

Kandavu and its Children of Nature.

THIRTY-THREE years ago, Ngaloa Bay, in the island of Kandavu, was one of the ports of call of the San Francisco boats, and passengers for Levuka went on thence in a little steamer called the "Fitzroy," which had been purchased for the conveyance of mails, and other purposes connected with the Administration of the Government of Fiji. It was there, at Kandavu, I first met the Hon. J. B. Thurston, whose adventures and perils had encircled his name with a halo of romance, and whose high achievements on the narrow stage of insular politics had already started him on the brilliant career which his daring ambition had projected for him. Fiji was to him a veritable wonderland of captivating beauty, and rich in promise of commercial greatness. He had made the country and its people the special objects of his patient study, and acquired such intimate knowledge of the Fijians, and of the complicated racial influences that had shaped their social life,

as enabled him to assume with advantage to all concerned, a commanding position in the Councils of the Government.

He had come down to Kandavu to meet his wife, an intelligent, gracious, and sweet-mannered lady, who was returning to her island home from a lengthened visit to Lady Robinson, laden with botanic treasures from the conservatories of Government House, at Sydney. For, like her husband, she found a keen delight in the cultivation of flowers and plants, and displayed a lively interest in all that might conduce to the agricultural prosperity of her adopted country.

I carried to Mr. Thurston letters of introduction which opened the way to very friendly and cordial intercourse between us, and furnished opportunities for the discussion of questions of vital importance to the best interests of Fiji. There was no man better fitted than he to shape the policy and guide the destinies of that new Colony, and it was eminently creditable to the discrimination and sagacity of Sir Arthur Gordon that he so readily recognized Mr. Thurston's ability, and secured his intelligent endorsement of his policy and his firm adhesion to the service of the State.

As Kandavu was then on the highway of traffic, there was a very mixed lot of people gathered together in the little town of Wailevu, on Ngaloa

Bay. There were two men from Yass, one of whom was an invalid, and had gone down to Fiji with his friend in quest of health; an Oxford student was seeking physical relaxation, and the mental expansion that comes from travel; an asthmatic man from Ballarat, a wizard who seemed to be financially stranded, and an American colonel, who had achieved some fame in connection with Samoan troubles. He was related, it was said, to the President of the United States, and had been sent by the Government of the Republic with gifts for distribution among the chiefs of Samoa. His active intervention in local politics had caused some trouble, and he had been seized as an adventurous agitator by the Captain of a British warship and deported to Fiji. Thence he found his way later on to Auckland, where I met him exulting over a successful appeal which he had made to the British Admiralty, by whom he had been awarded substantial compensation for his illegal deportation. There were also at Wailevu at that time, a number of men who were on their way to Levuka, who hoped to be able to substantiate their claims to blocks of land which they alleged had been purchased from certain chiefs.

A few European settlers had secured plantations along the coast at Kandavu which they cultivated to some extent, but they were discouraged and depressed by the low price that ruled for cotton,

and many of them were not possessed of sufficient capital to engage successfully in new enterprises.

One planter told me he cultivated a little tobacco and about 500 acres of tapioca. There was something very primitive in his mode of agriculture. He had neither horses nor bullock teams, but as his land required to be turned over he yoked some twenty men to the plough, and he said they liked the work and did it well. The main exports from the island, then, were cocoanuts, bananas, tobacco. copra and fibre. There were many other natural products that were commercially valueless, partly from the want of efficient labour, and partly from the want of capital, and the spirit of enterprise, perhaps, to turn them to practical account.

Mr. Thurston took advantage of his visit to Kandavu to meet the chiefs of the island in conference on matters affecting the interests of the province, and from far and wide, from many a native town, there came contributions to the customary feast. Upwards of a hundred women and boys passed into Wailevu, walking in Indian file, each one carrying a basket laden with fruits of various kinds, or with baked preparations of these, and other products of the country. Men passed too, bearing in their hands yangona roots, from which they made the Kava, the beverage so commonly used in the islands.

But it was after the function was over that I saw sights that for picturesqueness and occasional grotesqueness exceeded anything I had ever witnessed before. After laying their burdens at the feet of those who had been appointed to receive them, men and maidens all repaired to the forest and spoiled the trees and shrubs of their foliage which they used in personal decoration. With deft fingers they wove chaplets and girdles for themselves with the vines, and tastefully festooned and wreathed their bodies with parasites and creeping plants—just like veritable children of nature who decked themselves with her garlands and reflected in their faces her fitful moods. Towards nightfall, those who had come from a distance filed off out of the town, bright-eyed, frolicking girls among them smiling cheerily in our faces as they passed by, or else, with a pretty coyness of manner, they vanished among the wanton growths of the forest. Some of them in order to add to their natural charms had put great daubs of black and blue on the forehead and cheeks ; and when I stopped them and, pointing to the daubs, asked why they were there ? the eye sparkled with fun and they broke away with a merry, musical laugh.

The Roko, Thangi Levu, was a well-formed, stately, vigorous and remarkably fine-looking man in the prime of life. I was impressed by his frankness and clear intelligence. He moved among his

people with the mien of a king. When they happened to meet him they turned aside a pace or two from his path, and, dropping into a respectful attitude, saluted him with the exclamation, "Ndua woh, ndua woh," accompanied with a subdued clapping of the hands. With quiet dignity the chief passed on, hardly deigning to notice those who rendered such lowly homage at his feet.

The Marama, his wife, was a tall, fine-looking woman, intensely dignified in movement, and profusely decorated with leaves. She moved about usually in the evening with a "siluka," or cigarette between her lips, and a burning brand in her hand. She bore a high character for consistency and purity. "Sa mothe," she said to me in her own dignified way when our interview had closed. It means "Go to sleep," and is commonly used like our "Good-night."

CHAPTER XI.

Native Customs Weakening under New Conditions.

THE Fijians, who seem to be a product of Melanesian and Malayo-Polynesian races, are of a light brown colour, which passes into deeper shades in the mountain districts. They have short frizzled hair, of a light sandy hue, caused by washing it with a preparation of lime procured from burnt coral; that material is used in order to the promotion of comfort and cleanliness. They are a well-made, stalwart race, with good features; their chiefs especially, as a rule, are handsome men of imposing personality and courtly bearing. The women, generally, in point of appearance, are inferior to the men. That is probably the stamp in nature of the old heathen degradation in which they lived. But under the benign influences of British rule and the new social leaven that is working in them, they will no doubt gradually rise to their true position and develop into a higher type of comeliness and

womanly grace. The people are in the main intelligent and docile, good-natured, curious and easily amused. They seemed to be utterly and hopelessly averse to labour. That, I was told on all sides, was the outcome of "Lala," or the right possessed by their chiefs from time immemorial to claim, without giving equivalent of any kind (beyond the feast known as "Vakaotho") the labour or property of the people for their own advantage.

But there is another custom that has bound them as with fetters of iron, and effectually discouraged all personal exertion in order to the acquisition of wealth. It is that known as "Kerekere," a word that means the mutual appropriation of property. While individual rights are to some extent recognized, the claims of the tribe and of relationship are so strong as to constitute a lien upon all personal possessions. "The wealth of a Fijian consists," it has been said, "not in the amount of his property, but in the number of the friends from whom he can beg." When each individual can indulge his natural indolence and draw on the abundance of his friends for the supply of his wants, the more active and energetic among the people lose all stimulus to exertion, knowing that whatever they accumulate will excite the cupidity of idle relatives, who will remorselessly use the "Kerekere" to enjoy the

fruits of the toiling and spinning of industrious friends.

We come, here and there, upon indications of a weakening of the power of the old custom under the new conditions of life in the Colony. A native of Deuba, the owner of a banana plantation which yielded him a large income, entreated the Government to make the custom of "Kerekere" illegal, so as to furnish him with an excuse for refusing to give his hard-earned savings to thriftless friends, whose importunities were always clamouring in his ears.

Tauyasa, of Naselai, was a prosperous planter, whose profits from banana culture steadily grew until he was enabled to buy a cutter and a horse, and furniture for his house. To the chiefs who flattered him and the host of idle relatives who wanted to live upon him, he turned a deaf ear, and resolutely refused to distribute his property among them. They took their revenge by circulating infamous stories regarding him, and taunted him with aiming to rise above his station, and to imitate those who were better than himself—a reproach that is of all imputations the hardest for a Fijian to bear. His health broke down under the strain of the persecution to which he was subjected, and he died in heroic resistance of a custom which more than anything else, perhaps, has

operated disastrously against the best interests of the people.

The Fijians had therefore no inducement to industry in order to acquire wealth, and little incitement to do anything for which there was no immediate pressing necessity. Hence the significance of the word, "Malua," in old Fiji; anything that seemed to involve effort—that demanded energetic application, would be attended to "Malua," in the indefinite and sweet by-and-by.

"The Fijian," is the testimony borne by competent witnesses, "does not refuse to work because he is naturally indolent, but because he has no security for anything he may obtain by his diligence and toil."

The Government, fully alive to the evil of "Kerekere," can do nothing in the way of legislation to suppress or extirpate it. It is too deeply rooted and too closely bound up with the social habits of the race for that. But all its influence, used indirectly, goes in the direction of discouraging and checking it; and with the creation of new wants and a desire for the material improvement of their condition—with the growth of a spirit of manliness and independence among them—this, and all other bars to progress, will no doubt in time be swept out of their path.

CHAPTER XII.

A Day on the Mountains.

THE land at Kandavu is generally high and broken, and clothed with vegetation of a vivid green. The island narrows at one part into an isthmus half-a-mile wide, known as "Yarabali," which means "Haul-across." It has an evil savour of heathen cruelty clinging to it, and takes its name from an old custom still in force of dragging canoes and boats over it to the other side in order to save the trouble and escape the peril of a long passage round the western point. The highest mountain is known by the name of Washington, but its native name is Buke Levu, which it takes from its resemblance in shape to a yam hillock. Hardly 3,000 feet high, it is believed to be an extinct volcano, and has hot springs welling at its base near the town of Nasau. The natives still speak of a great earthquake in which many people perished. A number of women who were out on a fishing excursion at the time of its occurrence, took refuge in a cave which crashed in upon them and killed them all.

The ascent of the mountain was a serious undertaking in the humid heat of those days, but I braced myself up for the attempt, and set out in company with a friend and one of his native attendants. Here and there the slopes were terraced with taro beds, which were irrigated by channels leading to them from some permanent water supply, singularly resembling the descriptions given to us of the cultivated terraces of the Pamirs.

The taro is a nutritious esculent, and is said to be to the Fijian, like our bread, the "staff of life." The yam vines crept across our path, the bread-fruit hung above our heads almost within our reach, and all around us there were wild figs growing in great abundance. We plucked some of the fruit, which is smaller than that with which we are best acquainted, and a white milky juice flowed copiously from the broken twig. Mamie-apples hung within easy reach of our hands, and the pine-apple, without cultivation, was yellowing into ripeness at our feet.

Leaving behind us a patch of "Masi," we came to a sort of resting place about mid-way up, where we found a native oven three or four feet in diameter, and about two feet in depth. It was paved with large rounded stones, upon which, when heated, the fruits and tubers were laid that were to be used for food. Overshadowing the oven

there was a clump of bananas bending under the weight of their fruit, and the ground was strewn with chili pods, shed by the bushes under which they lay. We pressed on and up through a dense jungle of "Ngasou," which was all trackless and rose two or three feet above our heads. At last, after much patient toiling, we stood on a comparatively bare elevation, greatly heated, looking longingly at the clustering cocoanuts hanging from fifteen to twenty feet above us, and wishing with all our heart that we could get some down to quench our raging thirst. A few words addressed to the Fijian in his own language sent him up the tree like a squirrel. Three or four nuts were broken off and cast to the ground. He then descended, and with wonderful deftness stripped off the outer fibre which clung to the shell, opened one of the "eyes," and presented to us a deliciously cool and refreshing draught, which served not only to quench thirst but also to invigorate nature's exhausted forces.

The barrier reefs that girdle the islands of the South Pacific are of immeasurable commercial advantage to their inhabitants, supplying them with natural breakwaters and harbours, in which all sorts of sailing craft may take refuge from stormy winds and ride in security in tranquil waters. There is always an opening in the reef opposite to a river mouth, as the coral builders

cannot do their work within the influence of fresh currents flowing from the land.

As we looked out upon the blue waters of the bay before us, we could clearly follow the trend of the coral reef by the line of surf without ; while within the rocky barrier the water, placid as a lake, took a pale blue tint from the coralline wall against which it rested. Over against us was the island of Ngaloa, which is little more than a mile across any way you take it ; and, looking away to the left, is Cocoanut Point, which had a mournful interest. For there, only a few years previously, the natives heard for the last time the beating of the "lali bokolo," that is the instrument that called them to partake of the cannibal feast. And when my attention was directed to the Point, I said, "All honour to the brave and heroic men, whose patient sowing in faith has accomplished such a wondrous change in this Fijian race."

We heard no songsters in the woods, but, pushing our way through a thick undergrowth, we startled out of his day-dreams a drowsy white owl, which blinked hard and flew heavily out of sight. Within a few feet of us, apparently unscared by our presence, there was a large parrot of gorgeous plumage, perched on the branch of a tree. He looked a superbly lustrous thing in the light of the sun—a bird of perfect beauty embowered in the rich green foliage of that mountain brow.

As we descended we came upon some delicately tinted flowers, and tried in vain to find one with some sweet breath of perfume in it. Some trees had pretty little clusters of bloom, and every cluster was frilled, as it were, with five snow-white petals ; while other trees, apparently of the same species, had around their blossoms a magenta frill. And at our feet, creeping humbly along, there peeped out, here and there, a beautiful blue and white convolvulus, which the Fijian as he passed stooped to admire, and as he admired it he plucked it and stuck it tastefully in his frizzled hair.

We came upon a procession of land crabs in pilgrimage over a shoulder of the hill. They looked very comical carrying their shells high up in air. On coming to a slippery place in the descent they sometimes lost their foothold, and clattered down until some obstacle arrested their fall. After some little interval their claws, which had been pulled under shelter, re-appeared, and, at first cautiously, then with more apparent confidence, they proceeded on their way. The Hermit crabs moult or change their abodes as circumstances require, and have no hesitation in seizing the shell of periwinkle, or whelk, or other mollusc, devouring the inmate and appropriating the house to their own use.

We made unsuccessful search for the "walking leaf." In old days travellers told of strange trees that grew in sunny lands whose leaves fluttered to the ground and with sluggish motion walked away. That came to be counted among the marvels which only the most credulous of mankind could be expected to believe. But the existence of the "Animated, or Walking Leaf" is now one of the well established facts of natural history; and in the private collection of an enthusiastic entomologist I saw, some years ago, one which was reported to have been captured in Fiji. The "Phyllium" is a very remarkable genus of Orthopterous insects of the family "Phasmidae," with wings that strikingly resemble leaves, not only in colour, but also in the way in which they are ribbed and veined. They spend their lives among leaves, are remarkably slow in movement, and would be preyed upon by countless foes were it not for their appearance, which is really a protection to them, as it is hard to distinguish them from the leaves around them.

CHAPTER XIII.

Levuka, the Old Capital of Fiji.

I HAD been a full week in Kandavu when a great cry from a group of natives rent the air :—"Steamer's coming !" The dwellers on the hills ten miles back had discerned her on the far horizon, and passed the word down from village to village on to Wailevu that the long-looked-for San Francisco boat was coming at last.

The captain of the "Fitzroy," the little steamer belonging to the Government of Fiji, sailed for Sydney by the out-going mail ship, in consequence of reports which had reached him of the serious illness of his wife, and Mr. Thurston, whose past experience as a navigator now stood him in good stead, undertook to take us on to Ovalau.

The following morning we were steaming abreast of Ono, an island lying off Kandavu, and as the day advanced the peaks of Viti Levu, the largest island of the group, rose above the horizon. On our other quarter we saw the island of Ngau,

where there were some native towns, but at that time no European planters. Beyond that lay Mbatiki and Nairai, the latter of which awakened some interest in us. There was a tradition among the natives, that many years ago a sailing ship crashed on the reef just off Nairai and became a total wreck. Traces of the disaster were still found in the silver dollars which some of the natives had in their possession.

That brief voyage from Kandavu to Levuka was an education to me on the affairs of Fiji. Mr. Thurston, I found, had all the points of its history at his finger ends. His knowledge of the Islands, and his intelligent acquaintance with the genius of the people—of their inner life and social structure—were phenomenal. The wisdom of the native policy he believed to be unassailable, and its beneficence, he confidently predicted, would be increasingly evident in the historical evolution of the Colony. Of the steady commercial progress of the country, with its marvellous fertility of soil and excellence of climate, he spoke with a calm assurance that inspired the fullest trust.

Two months later, the "Fitzroy," which had been purchased by Sir Arthur Gordon for inter-insular service, was wrecked on a coral reef near the mouth of the Singa Toko river. The smoke of bush fires on the mainland had obscured the coast-line, leading the Captain to mistake a passage

through the reef. Her loss caused serious inconvenience to public interests at a period when native troubles demanded rapid and energetic movements of the forces under the Governor's control.

Levuka, the old European capital of Fiji, and the scene of most of the stirring events of its early history, is situate on Ovalau, which has a coastline of about thirty miles. The island rises on all sides into rugged precipices and high mountain peaks, clothed to their very summits with the rich green foliage which stamps with such wondrous beauty those sunny lands. The town is built mainly on a narrow strip of rocky land that lies contiguous to the shore, a good many of the private residences being perched higher up on the wooded slopes and foot hills that lie behind. These have a good outlook upon the harbour, and away beyond it, upon the wide ocean gemmed on every side with lovely isles, some of which lie near at hand, while the remoter ones, robed with a soft blue haze, stand indistinctly out to view. The spacious harbour is often gay with shipping of all kinds and tonnage—from the deep-sea ships that carry copra and fibre and other products of these tropical lands to Australasian and European ports, to the cumbrous native canoe, with its yellow mat sails, that cautiously feels its way from isle to isle to barter produce or to purchase stores.

If it was not actually in contemplation, in 1876, to remove the seat of Government to a more advantageous site, the occurrence of such an event was not believed to be impossible. Mr. W. K. Thomson, of James McEwan and Company, Melbourne, whose firm had a sugar plantation at Suva, informed me that they had offered to present a block of land to the Government in the event of that place being selected as the capital. There was much to recommend the change. There was no suitable back country to Levuka—no room for enlargement or extension of the town on any side. Most of the land on which Levuka was built was the private property of the Wesleyan Mission, and the authorities refused to alienate any part of it ; they were sometimes reluctant even to let it on lease. Merchants and others, therefore, who desired to build had no alternative but to lease sites from the Church's agent there on his own terms. I know that, in 1884, it was apparently authoritatively denied that the Wesleyan Mission had ever refused to sell sites for business purposes at Levuka. But the fact remains that the Government understood that the case was as I have stated it, and represented that as one of the grounds why the Capital should be removed to Suva. The Roman Catholic Mission had also secured a valuable property just below that belonging to the Wesleyan Church, and there was apparently no desire to part

with that. These two considerations then—the hilly nature of the country, and the difficulty of obtaining land, led Sir Arthur Gordon to look about for a more suitable place for the seat of Government. And it was felt that, until that question should be definitely settled, there would be a measure of uncertainty in the movements of business men in Levuka, accompanied by a corresponding desultoriness in all the operations of trade.

But steady advance was made on all the lines of sound progress. A Good Templars' Hall was opened in 1875; and, in the following year, the Fiji Agricultural Society was formed to help forward in all possible ways the best interests of the Colony. The Chamber of Commerce was organized on a wider basis, and began to give earnest attention to all great questions affecting the prosperity of trade and planting. And from the more serious business of life the settlers sought relaxation in sports of field and water—in cricket, lawn tennis, canoe and yacht races, and other exciting amusements that Britons love. The Vangadathe Cricket Ground was secured as a recreation reserve for the town, the Government having given two hundred pounds towards the cost of purchasing it, and it now bears the name of Albert Park. By direction of Mr. Thurston it was planted with flamboyant trees, the flower of which is of great beauty, its rich colour being in perfect

harmony with the surroundings of climate and scenery of tropical lands.

The Levuka people resolved to honour and perpetuate in some public way the memory of Commodore Goodenough. He was one of the strong men of those early days, a good man who won by force of character the respect of all parties. He had held some official connection with the Colony. He was, as we have seen above, a member of the commission appointed to prepare the way for the Cession. He had conveyed Sir Arthur Gordon in his warship to Fiji, and was present at his installation when Thakombau formally made personal submission to him as the Queen's representative. The Commodore subsequently visited the Santa Cruz Islands—the same group in which, in 1871, Bishop Patteson was murdered—and he fell a victim to like treachery. He was pierced by arrows, and died eight days after on board his ship within two days' sail of Sydney. That was in September, 1875. Some years after that a tower was added to the Mechanics' Institute at Levuka, and a Goodenough Memorial Clock was placed in the tower, its cost being defrayed by public subscription.

There is a charming walk along the coast by a road which had been extended some distance by the Royal Engineers, of whom there was a detachment

of about eighty at Levuka. It leads to the Waitovu Waterfalls, a scene of rare rustic beauty and romantic interest, barely a mile out of the town. There a succession of silvery cascades leap in sparkling foam-bells from rock to rock and gather to a head in one great volume, which pours itself in a broad flashing sheet into a deep basin that is overshadowed by heavy beetling cliffs. These are crowned with a clump of graceful cocoa-nut palms, and draped with a profusion of vegetation that is fairly bewildering in the richness of its endless variety and beauty. The hand of industry had done laborious work there in forming terraces, one above the other, for the taro beds, which were all irrigated by streams leading from this copious water supply.

CHAPTER XIV.

Round Ovalau by Sea.

I HAD occasion to visit Vero, which lies on the other side of Ovalau, nearly opposite to Levuka; the mode of travel being an open boat rowed by two "labour boys," who had donned their best sulus and poured all their wealth of ornament into their ear-lobes. The heat was pleasantly tempered by a refreshing breeze, and I was fortunate enough to have with me one who had full knowledge of the history and social life of the people, and who pointed out to me as we passed them scenes of melancholy and tragic interest, whose superb natural beauty seemed smirched by their association with cruelty and wrong. At the head of every little bight there stood a native town with its background of luxuriant vegetation and grove of cocoa-nut palms. Canoes, with their huge triangular sails spread to the breeze, spanked past us, laden with taro and yams for the Levuka market.

To our left rose far above the neighbouring heights, with rugged and precipitous sides, the

mountain fastness to which the Lovonis had retired in 1871, on their revolt from the rule of Thakombau. At the instigation of Maafu, the crafty Tongan chief of Lomaloma, they had refused to pay a tax which they accounted inequitable; and, carrying their women and children to a strong palisaded position where they had gathered large stores of food, they hurled proud defiance at Thakombau and his native troops, who had pitched their camp on the other side of a deep valley which lay between the contending forces. The warfare was of a very desultory kind, with few fatalities. Still, it was not only calamitous to those immediately concerned, it had also a hampering and unsettling effect on European trade and enterprise on the island—not to speak of the ghastly spectacle occasionally exhibited of human limbs impaled on spears, and carried with yells of triumph through the "papalangi" town. Therefore the restoration of peace was greatly desired. Through the mediation of one of the Mission agents the Lovonis were induced to lay down their arms, and submit themselves to the king.

The whole tribe, numbering many hundreds—men, women and children, all of them wasted and haggard with famine, some of them old and bowed with the weight of years, were marched into the native town of Levuka, where they were sentenced as a punishment for their late rebellion to be

transported to other islands and to serve in hard labour for a term of years. They were then—as it was euphemistically put—portioned out to the different applicants for their services. In other words, they were sold into servitude to those who were willing to buy them at Thakombau's hands.

We returned to Levuka by way of Mokiriti, passing between Landi Alewa and Landi Tangane, two small islands closely associated with the old mythology of Fiji. Before us lay the Yanutha Islands, which sheltered the waters in which we sailed from tempestuous winds, making, with Mokiriti on the one side and Ovalau on the other, an excellent and spacious harbour known as Port Kinnaird, in which vessels used to lie in safety during all the violence of the hurricane months.

The islands lay grouped before us on every side, some of them rugged and broken, their scarred and fissured slopes half concealed under the grand beauty of deep green foliage and the graceful forms which vegetation so often assumes in tropical lands, with a Fijian hut peeping out here and there from a clump of cocoanut trees, or the house of a planter perched on the brow of a hill—while away in the distance the peaks of Viti Levu rose proudly above everything else, catching and dimly reflecting the glories of the setting sun. The whole scene was one of indescribable beauty, which no

writer's pen or painter's brush could ever adequately depict.

The gardens about Levuka were commonly hedged with the croton plant, from the berry of which the croton oil is expressed. It had been introduced from Tonga, but the oleaginous properties of its seeds had not been turned to profitable account owing to the high price of labour ruling in Fiji.

Full of a never-wearying interest are the coral reefs—"subaqueous gardens," as they have been called. Through the pellucid water one can gaze fascinated for hours upon the glories of the tropical sea. The coral, as we know it in these lands, is a very different thing from the living shrub in its native home on the reef. There it assumes almost every shade of colour; sometimes it is of a delicate pink, or blue, or brilliant mauve or pale primrose; and tiny fish of diverse colours—some of the most vivid green, others of dazzling blue, others, again, of crimson tints dart hither and thither through fairy bowers in pursuit of tiny prey. Then there are crabs of all sorts, and sea anemones, and echini, and, scattered up and down there are starfish giving faintest possible manifestation of the life that throbs within them.

CHAPTER XV.

The Administration of Sir Arthur Gordon.

IT was absolutely necessary that the administration of the Government should be conducted on lines of the most rigid economy. The sum of £104,000 had been advanced by the British Treasury to provide mainly for the liquidation of the old Fiji debt—the ultimate re-payment of which amount was from the first a distinctly understood condition of the loan. The employment of natives therefore in the administration of the Government was not only justified, but made imperative on financial grounds. There was an organization there ready to hand—Rokos, Bulis, and other functionaries admirably suited to accomplish the object in view. They were therefore appointed in their several grades officers of the Crown, to carry out to the best of their knowledge and ability the new duties prescribed to them to do.

But the existing political and social machinery of the country was utilized on another ground,

namely, that of policy. The Fijian regarded his chief as the highest and most potent embodiment of all authority, and only through his chief could he be effectively governed. And it was remarkable how easily the native rulers of the country slipped into the new position, with what facility and dignity they performed, as a rule, the new functions with which they were now clothed as high officials under the British Crown. The whole system as at present in force is an admirable training for them in the science of self-government.

The Village Councils assemble every month and deal with springs, wells, and all matters of local concern. The District Councils, presided over by the "Bulis," or heads of districts, represent groups of villages whose representatives meet monthly. The chiefs submit reports on the state of the villages under their jurisdiction, embracing such topics as sanitation, records of births, deaths, and marriages, the condition of schools, and matters generally affecting more or less directly the comfort and well-being of the community. The Provincial Councils meet twice a year. These regulate their own internal affairs, levy rates for the payment of the police, district clerks, and local officials generally ; arrange for the making and maintenance of roads and all matters affecting the interests of the province. The proceedings are conducted in order under the direction of a British official from

the native department. Finally, there is the Vei Bose, or Assembly of Great Chiefs, which meets annually in May. Representatives of all classes attend this meeting, but the voting powers are confined to the high chiefs, styled "Roko Tui," who are appointed by the Governor to administer the seventeen provinces into which the Colony is divided. This assembly discusses all matters of public interest, and advises His Excellency on native affairs. Its suggestions, when approved, are subsequently made law by enactments of the Legislative Council. Thousands of people usually gathered on the occasion of the assembling of the "Vei Bose." It was associated with great feasting and festivities. Vast quantities of products were presented, and distributed at the close of the proceedings.

The Statute-book of Fiji affords fullest evidence of Sir Arthur Gordon's diligence in framing a large and comprehensive body of ordinances for the promotion of the public health and safety, and for the advancement of the best interests of the people. A wise regulation prohibited, under a heavy penalty, the gift or sale of intoxicants to any Fijian. It was a wholesome measure, and seemed, in the earlier years at least, to be rigorously enforced.

The steady growth in importance of Levuka required that its municipal affairs should be put

under responsible control. The old Council that had been incorporated by Thakombau was dissolved when the country passed under British rule, and for two years the town had been under the immediate care of the Government. But by an Ordinance passed in 1877 the Town Board was called into existence to concern itself specially with municipal affairs. It consisted of a warden, three other officials, and six elective members, who were empowered to impose a tax to the extent of two shillings in the pound of assessed value of rateable property. But the actual power was in the hands of the Warden, who acted in all cases subject to the approval of the Governor.

Sir Arthur Gordon gave very careful consideration to the question of the most suitable seat of Government. The military, naval, and medical authorities that were consulted on the subject almost unanimously pronounced in favour of Suva, which they regarded as having special recommendations to be selected as the Capital of the Colony. For nearly five years a strong agitation was maintained in favour of the retention of Levuka as the seat of Government. Urgent petitions were forwarded to Her Majesty year after year praying that no "interference with existing arrangements should be permitted until the circumstances of the Colony be such as to warrant a change." Influential public bodies moved energetically in

the same direction. But the Governor, guided by his own judgment, and fortified by a clear expression of opinion from professional men, recommended Suva; and arrangements were accordingly made, by authority of the Colonial Office, to establish that town as the official centre of Fiji. To further communications from Levuka on the subject the Secretary of State for the Colonies replied with a peremptoriness that discouraged all further action :—"The matter has been carefully considered and cannot now be re-opened." When finality on this vexed question had been fairly reached and officially announced to the public, Mr. Thurston arranged with James McEwan and Co., the registered proprietors of a very large area of land at Suva, for the sale of town allotments for business purposes. These were offered for public competition towards the close of 1880, and rapid progress was then made with the erection of buildings by those who had become purchasers of sites.

As High Commissioner of Polynesia, Sir Arthur Gordon visited Tonga, Samoa, and other islands in the South Pacific, guarding the interests of British settlers who fell within his jurisdiction, wherever settled on these various groups; and, in 1878, he made a visit to Great Britain, leaving Mr. George William Des Voeux as Lieutenant-Governor. The Royal Engineers with their officers, who had

been for some time engaged in the construction of necessary public works were now withdrawn, and the loyalty of the natives to the new order was severely put to the test. But they entirely justified the confidence that was placed in them. Mr. D. Wilkinson, who was at the head of the Native Department, and Mr. Thurston, who was Acting-Colonial Secretary, were both in closest touch with both chiefs and people ; and over and above all personal influence, there was the morally controlling power of the Mission which pledged them to civil order and fealty.

The Acting-Governor humanely interested himself in the condition of the Polynesian immigrants, and applied himself to remedy an abuse from which they sometimes suffered. On the expiration of their term of service they were paid their wages—three pounds a year—not in coin, which would have been useless to them on their return to their island homes, but in goods, and the value of these, in some cases, was found to be so much out of proportion to the amount of wages due that, in 1879, the Acting-Governor caused a law to be passed requiring all payments to Polynesians to be made through the Agent-General of Immigration.

On the return of Sir Arthur Gordon to the Colony towards the close of the following year, he devoted himself unweariedly to the duties of his

office, but without gaining the sympathy and moral support of the community. Conscientious and high-minded in his administration of affairs, and sincerely desirous of advancing the best interests of the Colony, he felt himself under special obligations to protect the native race by stringent ordinances against all that would hinder their development under wise official guidance, on the lines of their own immemorial customs and traditions. His firm adhesion to this policy, and, perhaps, his calm, if not haughty, indifference to the counsels tendered to him so persistently to abandon it in favour of another, which his self-appointed advisers imperiously dictated, aroused against him the hostility of a large section of the community, who heard of his approaching departure from the Colony with manifestations of exuberant joy.

The Wesleyan Mission Agents and his Legislative Council expressed in eulogistic terms their sense of the services which he had rendered to the country during his term of office; and in addressing a meeting at Nasova on the first November, 1880, he said :—"The chief wants of the Colony, in 1875, were capital, labour, means of communication with the outer world, establishment of judicial tribunals, foundation of educational institutions, and an increased revenue." All these wants, he could truthfully say, he had honestly endeavoured to

supply. There had been a steady advancement in the prosperity of the Colony from year to year. During the decade embraced between 1868 and 1878 the exports had increased in value to £192,865 ; the rate of increase for 1879 was equally satisfactory, and a buoyant spirit of hopefulness then spread through the whole Colony, contributing no doubt to some extent to its steady advancement on all the lines of material progress. The revenue for 1880 was estimated at £80,000. The customs returns for that year showed a steady increase over the figures of all the preceding years, and a healthy advancement in the production of the staple articles of export. The total value of the exported produce of the Colony for 1880 was set down at £177,912, as against £132,513 for 1879, or an increase of £45,398. The surplus was entirely due to the increased production and exportation of those articles which require intelligent cultivation and skilful preparation. Over one-half was contributed by cotton and coffee, which latter product for the first time took a prominent place among the exports of the Colony. These figures afford clearest evidence that a full tide of prosperity was flowing in upon the settlers, a state of things that stood in sharpest contrast with that which obtained in the early days of Sir Arthur Gordon's administration. Then, the whole planting interest seemed to be sunk in

the lowest depths of impecuniosity and hopelessness. Capital and enterprise were alike lacking. Improved properties were put in the market, for which no buyers appeared. Hundreds of acres of sugar-cane, nine feet high, were running to waste at Suva for want of labour to cut, and mills to crush it. I passed through scores of acres of cotton at Taviuni, which were all neglected, and when I inquired the reason of it, I was told that there was no profit in cultivating it. But all that was changed when Sir Arthur Gordon's term of office expired. His administration, however, seemed somewhat ungenerously to be left out of count as an important factor in the enormous expansion of trade that had taken place.

On the 10th November, 1880, His Excellency left Levuka amid the studied coldness of the general public and with an utter absence of any attempt at popular demonstration. In strong contrast with that hostile attitude displayed towards him by the European community was the manifestation of affection and respect entertained for him by the chiefs of Fiji. At the Vei Bose it was desired that his name should be for ever associated with the Colony by the grant to him of one or more small islands in consideration of his services, which the chiefs gratefully recognised, and he was accordingly enrolled as one of the "Taukeis" of Fiji. After leaving the Colony he

still continued to hold office as High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and was consulted by the Governor of Fiji on certain branches of the administration. At the close of the year 1881 he finally severed all official connection with the Colony.

CHAPTER XVI.

Australian Enterprise in Fiji.

THE Hon. J. B. Thurston, who had acted for some time as Colonial Secretary, was subsequently appointed by Her Majesty's Government to fill that office, and energetically seconded the efforts of his chief to establish the prosperity of the Colony on a sound commercial basis. With that object in view he visited Melbourne in the year 1880, and was banqueted at the Australian Club by Mr. W. K. Thomson, who invited some of the leading men of the city to meet his guest. Mr. Thurston made the best use of that opportunity to enlarge on the growing trade and important industries of Fiji, and actively availed himself of all means that offered for the diffusion of such information on the capabilities and prospects of the Colony as might create interest and cause some diversion of capital in that direction.

From Melbourne he proceeded to Sydney, where he was entertained on board the steamer

"Katoomba" by the Directors of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company. A distinguished assemblage of leading citizens were also present; and there, as in Melbourne, Mr. Thurston expounded the leading features of the Government policy, pointed in glowing words to the expanding volume of trade attested by Customs returns, and urged that closer commercial relations be established between these great Australian Colonies and the fair cluster of islands in the South Pacific which he had the honour to represent.

No more favourable time for Mr. Thurston's mission could have been chosen. Already had the products of Fiji, and her exhibits at the International Exposition recently concluded at Sydney, awakened surprised interest and inquiries. The Colony had made there a most attractive display of tropical industries, and had secured no less than sixty-eight awards. And now, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, whose head-quarters were at Sydney, allured by the strong inducements offered, committed themselves to a great enterprise which was big with promise for the future of Fiji. The Company agreed to purchase a thousand acres of land from the Government at two pounds per acre, and to erect a mill on the Rewa River capable of turning out five hundred tons of sugar per month, the cane to be carried from the plantations in steam punts which they

were to provide. Their operations at the mill, it was stated, would be sufficiently extensive to occupy a hundred white men, while the services of two hundred coolies would be also required. The estimated outlay for buildings and plant exceeded £100,000. A guarantee was given that a commencement would be made with the crushing of cane in June, 1882. Planters were invited to pledge themselves to supply cane to the mill for a period of ten years at the rate of ten shillings per ton of 2,240 pounds, irrespective of density.

Mr. Thurston was instrumental in securing other investments in Fiji besides that one, altogether amounting in the aggregate to about £150,000. Grateful recognition was made of this important outcome of his visit. It was regarded as having "culminated in a success which marked a new epoch in the history of the Colony," and tending to bind it with the golden bands of commerce in closer relations to the Australian States.

Honoured by the Queen with the Companionship of St. Michael and St. George, and possessed of the fullest confidence of the Colonial Office, Mr. Thurston became Administrator of the Government on Sir Arthur Gordon's departure from Levuka on 10th November, 1880. Just a week after his assumption of the duties of his new office a serious

accident befell both him and his wife, from the effects of which the latter never really recovered. He had devoted much time and care to collecting all the rarest and loveliest species of crotons, many of which he himself had discovered at Rotuma and other far away isles ; and his garden at Levuka glowed in season with the gorgeous colours of some of these. As Mr. and Mrs. Thurston were leaning together on a handrail admiring the fair show which the flowers made, their support gave way, and they both fell heavily to the ground, a distance of seven feet. Mr. Thurston escaped with a sprain of one of his wrists, but his wife sustained more serious injuries which, little more than a year subsequently, caused her death. During her long illness she received unremitting personal attentions and expressions of the profoundest esteem from the Thakaudrove contingent of native soldiers, who gratefully remembered the thoughtful goodness and kindly concern for their interests which she had shown to them during her residence at Taviuni ; and on her decease they pathetically claimed the privilege of being permitted to carry her remains to the grave.

Sir William Des Voeux was appointed Governor of Fiji in succession to Sir Arthur Gordon. He had held office as Lieutenant-Governor, as we have seen, during Sir Arthur Gordon's absence in Great Britain ; and had ample opportunities afforded him

to become acquainted with the affairs of the Colony. He was no stranger to its past history and progress; he was fully cognizant of its resources and needs; and the colonists, sanguine that the change would be fruitful of good, hopeful that his administration would be a popular and successful one, received him on his arrival, on 20th December, 1880, with very cordial demonstrations of welcome. He moved, however, too closely on the main lines of policy laid down by his predecessor to win the confidence of the trading part of the community.

Early in May, 1880, the island of Rotuma, on the petition of its chiefs, was formally annexed under Letters Patent to the Colony of Fiji. Sir William Des Voeux proceeded thither in the warship Miranda, and with customary ceremonial received the formal submission of the chiefs. The function concluded, the usual feasting and grotesque exhibitions of native games were provided for the entertainment of visitors and people. Mr. Charles Mitchell, one of the officers of the Fiji Civil Service, was appointed first Commissioner of Rotuma.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Daring & Heroic Tongan Prince.

MAAFU was for upwards of thirty years one of the most prominent and influential men in Fiji. He was the son of Josiah, king of Tonga. His mother was numbered among the earliest converts to Christianity in that kingdom, and he had the advantage of receiving an elementary education in one of the Mission schools, which gave breadth and keenness to a naturally shrewd and intelligent mind.

Towards the close of 1842, two vessels under British colours arrived at Tonga-tabu for the purpose of securing a party of Tongans to cut sandalwood at New Hebrides. Maafu, fired by a reckless ambition and love of strife, engaged to furnish sixty-seven men for the expedition. These were embarked and they touched at Lakemba, where they hoped to be able to reinforce their numbers, but failing to do that, they continued their course to Eromanga. On arriving at that island the

Tongans, armed with muskets, were landed, and a quantity of sandalwood was cut and taken on board. The natives continued friendly for some days, but the theft of three axes caused a disturbance, and one of the supposed thieves was shot by the Tongans. In the fray that followed, a man on the other side was wounded by an arrow, and afterwards died. Provisions failing, the party went on to Vate, or Sandwich Island, where the Tongans were landed and directed to cut wood. They soon came into conflict with the natives there, who were defeated with the loss of twenty-six men killed. The victorious party then stormed a fort, which they took, a number of the defenders having been shot. The survivors retreated to an island where they hid themselves in a cave, whither they were pursued by Maafu and his party, who, when unable to reach the fugitives, pulled down some neighbouring houses, piled the materials in a heap at the mouth of the cave, and setting fire to it, suffocated all who were within, excepting two who escaped.

In the year 1845 King Josiah Tubou died, having designated as his successor George Taufaahau, one of the most influential chiefs of Tonga. But soon after his accession he had to deal with disaffection and revolt on the part of some of the more powerful chiefs. Maafu was mainly the cause of trouble. Of a daring and restless nature,

fond of adventure and intrigue, and with a strong liking for political turmoil which invited his interference and favoured his ambitious designs, he incurred the displeasure of his strong and sagacious relative, King George, both by breach of trust and bold rebellion against his rule.

The Tongans had for some time anterior to this maintained a friendly intercourse with Fiji,—more especially with the inhabitants of the Windward Islands. Their own country afforded no timber suitable for building large canoes, and therefore numbers of Tongans were constantly employed in Fiji in work of that kind—a canoe of one hundred feet in length usually taking from six to seven years to complete. Many of them had permanently settled at Lakemba, and they formed a considerable element in the population of some of the eastward isles. Believing that there was a fair field and wide scope in Fiji for the restless energies of his kinsman, and that the interests of Tonga might also be served by his expatriation, the King sent Maafu over to Lakemba, early in 1848, with a sufficiently strong force to enable him to establish his authority and win for himself possessions there.

Tall, and of powerful physique, with a handsome and resolute face, he had a crafty ambitious soul that never shrank from hardship and peril ;

and he had a band of brave warriors whose first article of faith was obedience to their leader's commands. He was then in the fresh, joyous flush of youth, about twenty-two years of age, an adventurer in quest of a home, and not averse to a Sovereign Chieftaincy. He soon began to lay his plans, which at one time promised to lift him to the proud pinnacle of his hopes. The dissensions of two of the native chiefs at Loma Loma led to a furious inter-tribal war. The merits of the case—the equities involved in it—were of no account to him. He announced himself as the champion and ally of the weaker side, and flung himself with a reckless gallantry into the affray. The stronger chief was beaten, and his country wasted ; and from Loma Loma as his point of vantage, the cunning Tongan pressed on from conquest to conquest until most of the neighbouring islands owned his sway. In about five years he fought his way into the supremacy of the whole of the Lau group, vesting the lands in his principal followers. King George, of Tonga, visited him about this time, and, in conference with Maafu, indicated the lines of policy on which he desired him to proceed.

Maafu's war canoes now ploughed the coast waters of Vanua Levu ; the drums of his warriors awakened the villages slumbering peacefully under the rustling foliage of the cocoanut groves, and spoil was gathered, houses were burned, and trees

hewed down. Thus his victorious braves swept the country until the whole province of Mathuata bowed submissively to his rule. He was not afraid to try issues even with the great Vunivalu himself, for he overran Solevu, on the Southern side of Vanua Levu, which acknowledged the supremacy of Bau.

It always seemed to me that there were a good many points of resemblance between him and some of the old, fierce Border chieftains of the Home-land. He was always ready for the foray and the fray ; the light of battle blazed in his eyes, and the lust of conquest was strong in his soul. The more indolent and listless Fijians felt subdued in the presence of the bold carriage and fierce daring of his impetuous liegemen, whose tyrannies and exactions, before the establishment of British rule, were extremely burdensome, and sometimes restrained only by the threat of bringing a warship to bear upon them.

When the conditional cession of Fiji was under offer to the British Crown, Maafu was accused by some of the chiefs of intriguing against the Queen's authority, and they requested Consul Pritchard to take steps to check his designs. Opportunity was accordingly taken of the arrival of a man-of-war to constrain Maafu to execute an instrument in which he virtually effaced himself, and candidly

acknowledged that he had usurped the place which he filled. In that document he admitted that he had no claim to the position of a Fiji chief, but was there simply to manage and control the Tongan subjects of King George.

When the declinature by the British Government of the sovereignty of Fiji on the terms proposed became known, the country reverted to the old condition of unrest and misrule. Disputes were constantly occurring between the Tongans of Lakemba and the inhabitants of the North-West coast of Vanua Levu, which brought disaster on the beche-de-mer and sandalwood trade in which the white settlers were engaged. The attention of Commodore Seymour having been directed to the matter, he arranged a conference between the rival chiefs, Thakombau, Maafu, and Ritova, and informed them in a quiet but impressive way that their foolish quarrels must take an end. That was all; but they were quick-witted enough to know what lay behind it, and they took the hint, and concluded peace. The following day the Tongan warriors launched their double canoes and sailed for Lakemba, beating their war drums and cheering lustily as they crossed the bow of the "Pelorus." In the year 1865 the principal chiefdoms united in one confederation, of which Thakombau was twice elected president. But when Maafu aspired to a similar honour, suspicion and distrust seemed to

be awakened in the minds of many of the chiefs, and the union was dissolved. Nothing daunted, however, he set to work on a scheme of his own. The Lau confederation, comprising the kingdom of Lau, with Maafu at its head, Thakaudrove, which was ruled by Tui Thakau, and Bua, was therefore constituted ; the whole embracing about one-third of Fiji. Of that confederation Maafu, in 1869, was elected chief. There was now no obstacle in the way of his return to his native Tonga. Full restoration to his place and privileges was offered to him. But he had a wider field and larger scope for the display of his abilities in Fiji than he could have in Tonga, and he decided to remain where he was.

A few years subsequently, believing that it would be for the best interests of the country to be under British rule, he actively co-operated with the other great chiefs in the movement to secure that boon. When Sir Hercules Robinson visited Fiji as High Commissioner, Thakombau, on 30th September, 1874, first executed the Deed of Cession himself, and then accompanied Sir Hercules to Loma Loma, Maafu's capital, to obtain the acquiescence of the great Windward Chief also. Maafu at once wrote his name and affixed his seal, cordially consenting to the acceptance of British rule for all Fiji. He was appointed Roko Tui Lau, and in the administration of the affairs of his province he

approved himself on all occasions a loyal and intelligent servant of the Government.

A painful injury to his foot, caused by a horse, resulted fatally. He died on the 6th February, 1881. Thus closed the career of one of the bravest, most resolute, and adventurous chiefs of the South Pacific.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Colony in Despondent Mood.

IN September, 1881, Levuka, in gayest mood, gave cordial welcome to the two princes who were on tour, and, under direction, took Fiji by the way. The great chiefs assembled to do them honour, the inevitable "Mekes" were performed, and the Governor exhausted his resources to entertain and divert his royal guests. Mr. Thurston was invited to dine with them, because, it was thought, "his unequalled knowledge of the Western Pacific would prove interesting." Always full of concern for the future prosperity of his Colony, and possessed of boundless confidence in its vast possibilities, Mr. Thurston made every effort to introduce new industries which, he had reason to believe, would add to its commercial wealth. With that object in view he had laid out a garden on a picturesque mountain spur beyond Nasova, which he filled with rare and beautiful exotics and plants of large economic worth gathered out of many lands; and thither he conducted the royal party,

thus affording them an object lesson in that true statesmanship which seeks assiduously and in all directions to promote the best interests of the people. The various functions connected with the visit of the princes concluded with a few gracious and courteous words spoken to them by the aged Vunivalu, who presented them at parting with the "tambua," or whale's tooth, according to the immemorial custom of his country.

The erection of public buildings was now rapidly proceeded with at Suva, and, by August, 1882, it became the centre and seat of administration in Fiji. The climate is believed to be not quite so healthy as that of Levuka, but there is a fine harbour, and there is ample space available for the extension of the city; and, in other respects, it has important advantages over the old capital, which are now very generally recognized.

A considerable section of the Colonists chafed under the political disabilities which the form of government under which they lived imposed upon them, and, in September, 1883, a public meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institute, Levuka, "for the purpose of taking steps to secure the representation of the political position of the Colony before the Australian Federal Convention." An agitation was also begun to promote the annexation of Fiji either to New Zealand, or to

Victoria. The subject was warmly discussed at a large public meeting that was convened later on, at which, with a good deal of enthusiasm and stormy eloquence, petitions were adopted and signed for presentation to Her Majesty's Government, praying that "Fiji should be incorporated with Federated Australasia; that it should be either attached to one of the powerful Australian Colonies, or be granted some measure of practical representation in its own Legislative Council." The Hon. R. B. Leefe, M.L.C., was appointed to proceed to Sydney as a special deputy representing the Colonists of Fiji, to support the prayer of their memorial to the Federal Convention.

In November, 1883, the Convention, consisting of the leading statesmen in these Colonies, met in Sydney to discuss matters of common interest, including the reported intention of Foreign Powers to make annexations in the Pacific. Sir William Des Voeux was present as the representative of his Colony. But the Colonial Office had arranged otherwise. For, after he had sailed, the Earl of Derby, Secretary of State, cabled to the Governor of New South Wales, requesting him to convey to the Governor of Fiji instructions for the attendance of Mr. Thurston at the Convention, for the purpose of giving information on the wide subject of the Islands of the Pacific. That cablegram was received by Mr. Thurston, as Administrator of the Govern-

ment, in the absence of Sir William Des Voeux, but in the circumstances he was constrained to remain at his post at Suva.

When Mr. Leefe presented himself at the Convention, he was adjudged to have no standing, as the Governor was present, and had taken his seat as the representative of Fiji. The memorial from the Colonists, however, was laid on the table on 30th November, by one of the members, and it was agreed by the Convention to include the petitioning Colony in the Federal Union of Australasia. Again in March, 1885, and later than that, renewed efforts were made to bring about the annexation of Fiji to New Zealand; but though the project was viewed with favour in the latter Colony, yet there were practical difficulties in the way of its accomplishment; and nothing came of these repeated movements to have it tacked on to one of its powerful neighbours.

Mr. Thurston's large personal knowledge of public affairs, and skill in dealing with them, received recognition from the British Government when, in the year 1884, he was appointed Assistant High Commissioner and Consul-General for the Western Pacific.

The disallowance by Sir Arthur Gordon of claims to land in Fiji by certain Germans, led to

some International friction between Great Britain and Germany; and a Joint Commission was appointed, on the demand of Prince Bismarck, to investigate the subject in dispute. Mr. Thurston was summoned to England to act as a member of that Commission. It met in 1885, and the Imperial Government, in compliance with its finding, but curiously enough in face of the evidence on which the claims had been disallowed, paid as compensation to four of the claimants the sum of £11,364 6s. 7d. In the year 1893 the Imperial Government made a demand upon the Colony for re-payment of the amount thus disbursed. But the demand was successfully resisted, mainly through the good offices of Lord Stanmore, who rendered the Colony important service on that occasion.

Mr. Thurston received a most gratifying welcome from the leading public men of England who were interested in Fiji politics. They accounted him the highest living authority upon that subject, and looked to him to illuminate it out of the rich stores of his large experience, and to aid them in the solution of the social problems with which they were forced to grapple, in order to the successful government of the Colony. The moulding of the native policy of the country was therefore placed largely in his hands. His judgment was deferred to and his suggestions adopted in all matters affecting the Fijian race.

Mr. Thurston now married again. His second wife was Mrs. Murray, the widow of a bank manager who died at Levuka, and sister of the Hon. J. Berry, formerly at the head of the Land and Survey Department in Fiji. He returned to Suva with his wife on 1st August, 1885. Sir Wm. Des Voeux had left the Colony in ill health in January of that year, and as his successor, Sir Charles Mitchell, had not yet arrived, Mr. Thurston was sworn in as Administrator. He received a kind reception on his arrival, and cordial expressions of confidence in him. A marked change had taken place in the Colony during his absence of about ten months. The planting and trading interests were now in a drooping and languishing state; and the buoyancy of spirit which the flow of prosperity had inspired, had given place to a tone of depression and discontent. Mr. Thurston, sincerely sympathetic with the difficulties of the Colonists, assured the deputations from the Chamber of Commerce and the Planters' Association which waited on him, that he would "do his very best according to his knowledge and ability to aid and assist in the present crisis." "It was absolutely impossible," he said, "to touch the native taxation scheme. It was based upon a settled course of Imperial policy which only the Imperial Government could unsettle. But he would recommend that, if such a course was necessary

and judicious. People spoke as if it were an individual tax. It was not that, but a tax on the land ; and it represented the Crown's share of the usufruct of the land. The system was similar to the village community system which had been in operation in India from time immemorial. He believed that, if it were possible to abolish native taxation, not one single native labourer would thereby be added to the plantations. Unless subjected to improper pressure, the Fijian would not work in his own country except in a fitful and unsatisfactory manner. It was not in the Fijian's nature to work steadily unless driven to it ; and he was certain that any planting enterprise dependent upon Fijians' labour only was bound to end in failure."

Mr. Thurston's sympathetic tone on that occasion, his frank and manly utterances, the courteous and thoughtful consideration which he gave to unofficial representations, the pains which he took to offer explanations and obviate difficulties and to establish a good understanding between the Government and the Colonists, created the very best impression on the public mind ; and the feeling spread and grew in strength that things would improve under the wise guidance of the strong hand that now held the helm.

CHAPTER XIX.

Thakombau and his last dying Act.

ONE of the most conspicuous objects that caught the eye of Mr. Thurston's guests was a painting of Thakombau Rex, which adorned the wall of his dining room. It seemed to me, as I gazed upon it, to indicate intelligence and consciousness of power, with traces of haughtiness well subdued.

The old chief had passed through some strange experiences which had been woven like many coloured threads into the warp and woof of his strong, manly character. Possessed of a splendid physique, he won in his early years a wide reputation for courage and daring, and virtually exercised the kingly power even before the death of his father Tanoa. He had fought his way to supremacy in his country largely through the help of white men and their weapons—castaway sailors and escaped convicts who, with arms and ammunition rescued from wreckage, or carried

with them from Australian penal stations, ransomed their lives from the ovens either by the terror which they inspired, or by the effective service which they rendered to the chiefs in their intertribal wars.

In his early manhood he extended and consolidated his father's authority by an insurrection which he planned and successfully carried out at Bau, on which occasion he dropped his old name Seru, taking instead of it Thakombau, or, "Disturber of Bau." That is a small island lying off the coast of Viti Levu. It is only about two miles in circumference, but it was the capital of a large part of Fiji—a great part of Viti Levu being tributary to it, a considerable area of Vanua Levu, Ovalau, Koro, Taviuni, Lakemba and other islands.

Thakombau was usually on good terms with the white settlers on Ovalau. They were fortunate enough to have among them an American named David Whippy, who wielded a powerful and salutary influence over them. He had made his home there as early as the year 1822, and under his guidance, regulations were framed for their government, which gave good character and tone to the whole community. But early in the forties, a resident of Bau named Pickering, who was suspected of disaffection to Thakombau, fearing his vengeance, escaped to Lakemba, whither an armed party was

despatched to capture him. But the white settlers at Ovalau, hearing of the circumstances, sent some of their number to rescue him. Thakombau, irritated by their action, and conceiving that they were all leagued against him, ordered them, under penalty of sharp reprisals, to leave the island. As they were not in force enough to resist his authority, they removed to Solevu, in Vanua Levu. Soon afterwards they were invited to return, but some years elapsed before they settled again in Levuka.

Thakombau, immersed in his ambitious projects to extend his sway and to stamp out disaffection among a section of his people, had long refused to receive the Lotu. But in the year 1853 a new and powerful influence operated on him, which gave a new direction to his thoughts, and changed the whole character of his future life. King George of Tonga, himself a notable fruit of Methodist Missions, early in 1853 called at Bau on his way to Sydney in the Mission ship, "John Wesley." He there met the Vunivalu and entered into formal alliance with him, engaging to return to Fiji at an early date, with an armed force, and help him in his wars against his enemies.

On his return to Tonga from the Sydney trip, the King wrote to Thakombau a letter which, more than any other influence, perhaps, led him to avow

his purpose to embrace the Christian faith. Soon after that King George returned to Fiji with a large fleet of canoes and force of warriors. He joined Thakombau in war against Ratu Mara, the Fijian chief's revolted brother. The Tongan army broke with a splendid courage through the enemies' lines of defence, and won an easy victory, which contributed to the firm establishment of Thakombau's rule. King George then visited some of the heathen islands, interviewed the chiefs, and urged them to submit themselves to Christian teachings.

The dark, troubled heathen past, with its nameless horrors and absolutism, was now largely purged out of Thakombau by the leavening power of the Lotu, to which he surrendered himself in a much more thorough and pronounced manner than Maafu had ever done.

The swarming into his country of whites of various nationalities opened up to him an unfamiliar phase of human life—the eager, enterprising commercial spirit manifesting itself in many forms. Then the ceremonialism of State functions, with which he was made acquainted on the advent of British rule, came with bewildering effect on his untutored mind. But his good qualities of heart and intellect were clearly recognized and won respect on every side. His closing years were passed in dignified seclusion in

his old capital of Bau. He had all that he needed to promote his comfort, and he never regretted the surrender of his empty royal title which he had made in exchange for the peace and freedom from molestation which British rule had brought to him and to his land.

Very pathetic was his last dying act when, his heart aglow with patriotic longing for the real advancement and social elevation of his race, he designated Mr. Thurston, and not one of his own sons, as "Chief of all the Fijians," in succession to himself. In that devolution of his office he expressed his sense of the services which Mr. Thurston had rendered to himself and his country, and his strong conviction that his people's interests might safely be confided to his care.

Thakombau survived his great rival Maafu just two years. He died on Ist February, 1883, amid the lamentations of all the people. His remains, covered with lime and coffined, were not interred until the close of April, when a great state funeral was accorded to the departed chief. Mr. Thurston, who was present with other high officials, mourned with a deep grief the loss of one whom he had ever regarded with affection and respect—feelings which the dead chief, on his part had always reciprocated in fullest measure.

The Fijians, on their own motion and at their own cost, erected a monument at Suva to perpetuate the name of Thakombau, and as an expression of their respect for one whom they had greatly reverenced and esteemed. It was unveiled on 9th November, 1889, by Sir John Thurston, in the presence of a large assemblage of natives and Europeans. It is an obelisk raised in the square between the general Government Offices and those of the Law Department. On each of the four sides of the pedestal there is a marble tablet, with an inscription in Fijian, recording the Cession of the Islands to the British Crown; the date of the Jubilee of Her Majesty's reign; and that the monument was erected by the chiefs and the native people of Fiji; the inscription on the north side being :—

Cakobau
Sa bale
1st Februeri 1885.

CHAPTER XX.

Personal and Communal "Lala."

THERE seems to be every reason to believe that the races of Southern Asia, far back probably in pre-historic times, came into direct contact with the Fijian tribes and powerfully affected their social and religious life, as abundant traces of some such influence meet us on every side at the present day. There is a growing body of evidence that at some remote period Asiatic emigrants possessing scientific knowledge and skilled in the art of war, made long voyages guided, like the pirates of the North, by the sun-stars over trackless and uncharted seas, and left here and there through Polynesia indications of their presence and memorials of a civilization, which reaches back through milleniums into a distant past. We meet everywhere in Fiji with symbols of the phallic worship of the East. The Fijian system of relationships is closely allied to that of the Tamils in India; and in the "Lala" we have the equivalent of the "Begar" of Kashmir.

The native of the valley of the Jhelum has no incentive to acquire property or accumulate wealth; he is content with a hand to mouth existence without laying up provision for the future. For he knows that if by any chance he possessed a hoard it would be wrung out of him by those who are over him. He is forced under this law to labour in repairing roads, and in performing other works which he may be required to do, and which the public interest may seem to demand—all without remuneration. And, like that, "lala" is the system in force in Fiji by which a chief may claim from his people whatever personal service or property is required for any public work affecting the good or honour of the tribe.

There are, however, two kinds of "lala" recognized in Fiji, distinguished as the Personal "Lala," and the Communal "Lala," which point us back for their origin to two distinct and widely different elements in the population of the group, namely, the Polynesian, among whom we find a ruling caste who claim privileges of birth and station and affect to trace their descent from the gods; and the Melanesian, whose system of government is based on social equality and whose chiefs have no personal interest in the waste lands of the tribe, beyond what is common to them with all the people. But among the Tongans, who are the branch of the Polynesian family that has

migrated to Fiji, the chiefs, it is now known, acquired rights in the soil that approach very nearly the manorial rights of feudal tenure. This personal "lala," then, represents the interest acquired in land by conquest—just as the Norman barons came into possession of their English estates. And on the Tongan chief reciprocal obligations rested, like those that were acknowledged by the feudal lord. The tenant who occupied his land, and manned his canoes, and fought his battles, claimed from his chief protection and supply of bodily need. Ancient custom required also that he who possessed the privilege of "lala" should provide a feast known as "Vakaotho" for those who thus rendered any service ; and the feast was felt by the people to be a sufficient satisfaction of their claims upon him.

Communal "Lala," as its name implies, is the exercise of the right for the common benefit. It is indispensable for the performance of all public works, such as road-making, the weeding of the village square, the construction of boats for general use, or the erection of guest-houses for the lodging of strangers who may claim hospitality from the tribe. Mutual help, in some measure, supplies the place of a metal currency. A man has no money to pay another to till his garden or erect his dwelling. He therefore applies to the chief, who instructs the community to give the needed

assistance—he, in his turn, giving such labour to others as may be required by them. The Communal "lala" which places such power in the hands of a chief is naturally liable to abuse, and domineering men have not scrupled to use it for the purpose of wringing out of the people for their own personal ends heavy toils that were unrequited. Within limitations, and under certain social conditions, it might be exercised with beneficial results to the general community. But it was abused so often and to such an extent, that the Government found it necessary first, to caution the chiefs, and then, to intervene with a curtailment of their privileges.

Though the people have a legal right to commute their "lala" service by a money payment, yet since the Cession not one instance has occurred so far as I know, of a native community expressing its wish to commute its obligations; although many of them receive from rents and taxes sufficient money to pay the required sum many times over.

I have seen a form of exaction practised by some of the higher chiefs that was rather a distortion of the custom of "Kerekere" than an abuse of the "lala." Chiefs of high rank, holding no office that allowed them to use the "lala," have visited native towns upon which the "vasu," or hereditary influence, gave them a special claim, and

asked boldly for such supplies as they desired to have. When their requests were courteously refused they made no difficulty of appropriating what they wanted in a high-handed way. Villages have thus been practically raided without any hope of obtaining redress.

When I was on a visit, on one occasion, to Vanua Levu, Ratu Timothi, one of the sons of Thakombau, came over from Bau in search of a missing canoe. His first place of call was Kubalau, where he annexed six turtles from the people of Nasonisoni. Thence he went on to Cocoa-nut Point, where in anticipation of a "Solevu" to Tui Bua, an immense quantity of yams had been collected in heaps of one thousand each. Ratu Timothi told the Buli of the town that he wanted one of these heaps of yams; but the Buli replied that it was impossible to give them, as they were for Tui Bua. He therefore sent his boat during the night and took a thousand yams on board without permission.

The chief of one of the islands required canoes to carry him and his followers to the Vei Bose, or great annual native meeting. He therefore gave directions for the immediate construction of three canoes, a work at which a number of his people steadily toiled for some months, and for which they received no pay.

Those annual meetings, held in May, at one time proved a fruitful source of serious evils which provoked loud and bitter complaint. On one occasion at Rewa every article of food was devoured by the hungry crowds that gathered there ; and for some months afterwards many families suffered the extremity of distress from the resulting famine. For a considerable time beforehand the people of the province in which the meeting was to be held were subjected to rigorous exactions, that suitable provision might be made for the coming guests. Their food was placed under "tambu," and they themselves condemned to an indefinite period of unrequited labour in making such preparations as the case required. Sir William Des Voeux exerted himself strenuously to reform the worst of the abuses that were wont to mark those annual gatherings. He limited the number of followers which a chief might take in his train, prohibited women from attending as visitors, and endeavoured to check the excesses which had become an outstanding feature of the meetings.

"I fear," Governor Des Voeux said, in opening the Native Council in 1881, "that there are places where some chiefs have been unduly exacting, and have obtained contributions, and called upon the people to supply labour for other than the legitimate needs that the Government recognize." It was agreed and published in a Regulation (No.

IV. of 1877) that "lala" should be restricted to the following purposes, namely :—House-building, planting gardens, fishing turtle, and any other works of public good. But some chiefs, considering that anything they wanted for themselves, for their own personal use, was of the nature of what is described as "public good," exercised the power of "lala" without any discretion or justice. The evil grew to such a head that Government intervention became absolutely necessary. Mr. Thurston therefore informed the chiefs that he must amend the Regulation by striking out the words, "and any other works of public good," which was accordingly done, to the obvious advantage of native interests.

It is no wonder that under the old regime when the chief was supreme in his province, and when no appeal from his decision was possible, that the tribesman, knowing that he had no security that, if he toiled, his gains would not be wrested from him, felt no desire to accumulate property, or to work harder than was needful for the bare sustenance of himself and his family. The control now exercised over the chiefs in the restriction of "lala" will be of large economical value to the colony in fostering habits of industry in the people, and in stimulating their practical interest and activities in thus contributing to its prosperity and material progress.

CHAPTER XXI.

Discipline and Industrial Training.

HOME training of the native children in Fiji is a thing that is almost unknown. The parents themselves, as a rule, had grown up in a wild freedom without any sort of energetic control, and have now only a dawning notion of the need of a system of discipline in order to the formation of manly character and the furnishing of the mind with useful knowledge. Centuries of moral degradation and of intellectual atrophy have left their marks upon the people, which will not be obliterated in this generation. The tone of the home-life and of the social life of the natives, judged by our standard, may not seem high, but it will compare favourably with the tone of life of many in our own Australian States, who are the product of a civilization largely evacuated of the Christianity out of which it grew. There is much in the condition and surroundings of Fijian children that may lead to an early development of pruriency, which is believed by some intelligent observers to

have a close connection with the decay of the race. But there will be a toughening of moral fibre under the wholesome influences now operating on them. Time, with wise and beneficent Christian rule, coupled with Christian nurture, will no doubt accomplish that.

The tobacco leaf, which grows commonly on the Islands, was for a long time used only as an insecticide—from which it took the name, "mate ni Kutu," but since the habit of smoking was introduced by a Manila ship, in the beginning of the last century, it has become almost a universal practice, and even children of both sexes become addicted to it from a very early age. The Missionaries have endeavoured to check the habit of smoking, and under their influence many parents have interdicted the use of tobacco to their families, but, in defiance of all prohibitions, it is well enough known that the habit is largely indulged in secret.

The primary education of native children is entirely undertaken by the Missionaries without any cost to the Government. The schools which have been established in many villages have done good work under the direction of native teachers, but not only is the discipline in many cases weak, and the attendance far short of what it ought to be, it is felt that, so long as the villages are so

numerous and so small as they are at present, the difficulty of finding efficient native teachers will always be an obstacle in the way of improving the standard of education and discipline. In the year 1902 the attendance reported at the Wesleyan Mission Native Schools was 24,261 ; and that at the Roman Catholic Native Schools, 1,890.

A knowledge of English would open up a boundless literature, and a vast new realm of intellectual enjoyment to the educated native mind. Attempts have been made in a desultory sort of way to place such a privilege within reach of the people. But few cared to avail themselves of it ; the attendance was irregular and fitful. There was no authoritative pressure brought to bear upon the pupils until they were carried through the initial drudgeries of the work. No doubt, in course of time, a wise educational scheme, comprising such a desideratum as that will be launched by the Government, and followed by the best results.*

Early in the year 1878, with the increase of population at Levuka, meetings were held for the purpose of establishing a public school for European children ; and in the following year an Ordinance was passed, which made ample provision for their

* This question is discussed in "Churches and Church Workers in Fiji," by C. Stuart Ross, pp 81–84.

education. The Levuka School Board was called into existence by Ordinance X., 1879, which provides that "the Town Board shall also constitute the School Board, of which the Warden shall be the chairman." The services of a competent teacher were secured, and, in April, 1879, the children met for the first time for instruction in the Good Templars' Hall. Thence they removed to an old store which was rented by the Board for educational purposes, and there they remained until the completion of the new school building in June, 1881. The Government, recognising the increasing importance of the new Capital, placed on the Estimates the sum of £500, as a provision for the Suva Common School, which was opened in June, 1883. The Ordinance is based on the educational systems of the Australasian States. Education is free and compulsory, the expense being defrayed by local rates and Government grants. The Roman Catholic Mission has two private Schools at Suva, and one at Levuka, for the instruction of European children belonging to its own Communion.

A Native Industrial School was opened at Yanawai, in Vanua Levu, in the year 1881, for the instruction of Fijian youths in mechanical arts. The expenditure on this institution was about £1000 per annum, exclusive of its indirect cost to the various provinces which contributed to it. The forest was felled, the land cleared, and houses

built for superintendents and students by the Vanua Levu people, free of cost to the Government. About a thousand natives were steadily employed on that work for a considerable time. Every province, further, continued to make contributions of yams and mats to the institution for a period of three years; and during all that time—from its foundation till 1884—the whole amount of revenue derived from it did not exceed £500. In 1895 the income was given at £192, while the expenditure was £1,000. In addition to an ordinary English education, the pupils were taught useful industries, such as sawing timber, carpentry, house-building, boat-building, ship-building, the cultivation of the food used at the school, and care and management of stock. The natives displayed considerable aptness in learning these useful trades, and made satisfactory progress on some of the lines of advanced civilization. A forward movement in the same direction was made in 1887, when a law was passed to enable young men to be apprenticed to artizans in order to their instruction in European Arts.

In 1884 public attention was directed to the alarming decrease of the native population which the census brought to light; and Mr. Thurston, in addressing the chiefs at their annual meeting, referred to the intention of the Government to appoint a certain number of intelligent natives to

be put under training as medical students, so that, in process of time, they might be competent to be advisers to their countrymen, and might avail to reduce the alarming death-rate which obtained in some of the provinces. Eleven youths of good character and approved intelligence were therefore chosen from the various districts, and placed for three years under a course of careful instruction in medical knowledge by Dr. Macgregor, assisted by the visiting physicians to the Suva Hospital. On the completion of their studies they were distributed as a sort of health officers in the more populous districts, to exercise some supervision over the health of the people.

Mr. Thurston, right through the long period of his connection with the Colony, had always exerted himself to the utmost to promote its educational advancement, and in all his legislation on the subject he manifested the keenest anxiety and desire to comply, so far as possible, with the expressed wishes of the public.

CHAPTER XXII.

Native Troubles and Operations of the Agricultural Association.

SOME of the tribes at Dreketi, chafing under the restraints of British rule, broke out into open revolt against the Government, but the disturbance was wisely and firmly suppressed, and the natives were taught that armed resistance to constituted authority would be swiftly and severely punished. Again, some years later, in 1884, and the following year, disturbances occurred on the Ra coast, which, with a political basis, had an element of resuscitated heathen fanaticism in them. Thirty young men obtained guns, drilled themselves, and marched from Ra to an island town, where they conducted themselves in a disorderly and riotous manner. They professed to act under a direct commission from the old gods conveyed to them by personal revelation. Those deities were represented as commiserating the distresses of the people, and as promising divine assistance and support to all who would devote themselves to the task of re-

dressing their wrongs, and restoring the old faith that had fallen into desuetude and decay.

Mr. Thurston, who understood the full significance of Fijian superstitious ferment, took immediate and stringent measures to check it. The offenders were promptly arrested, and various sentences of penal servitude were passed upon them. Disaffection broke out again soon after in the mountains of Viti Levu, with greater violence than ever. The manifestations were described as a species of Hau-hau-ism, which occasionally caused trouble to the New Zealand Government, a politico-religious revolt against both Christianity and British rule. The Fijian fanatics drilled themselves in military evolutions, and revived the performance of various secret heathen ceremonies. The socially-disintegrating power it possessed over them was evidenced by their proud defiance of the authority of their chiefs. Ratu Tevita, the Roko Tui Ra, feeling his helplessness in presence of this spreading disaffection, sent messengers to the European Stipendiary Magistrate in his province, to invoke his influence and authority in arresting the movement before it reached too great a head. The strong hand of Mr. Thurston smote swiftly, and the disturbance was soon subdued.

There were some people who declared that those "local outbreaks of old inter-tribal feuds were the

legitimate outcome of Sir Arthur Gordon's native policy." But similar disturbances happened over and over again in New Zealand history without the incitement of a Native Taxation Scheme. A wise and keen observer, who was familiar with Fijian life and temperament said in this connection :—"In certain political conditions, or under circumstances of general trouble, the native mind gets into a state of unrest, when it is exceedingly sensitive to impressions of a supernatural character, and ready to yield itself unreasoning to any delusion which may jump with its own inclination."

A Planters' Association was formed in Fiji as far back as 1880, for the discussion of all matters affecting the agricultural interests of the Colony. It comprised representatives of the industrial and trading classes, and clearly voiced the views and wishes, not only of the mercantile portion of the community, but also of those whose efforts were primarily devoted to the development of the capabilities of the soil. But although it energetically occupied itself with matters affecting the planting and kindred interests, yet it did not largely concern itself with the improvement of agriculture and with the importation and cultivation of new plants of economic value. The Agricultural and Industrial Association of Fiji was therefore formed towards the close of 1886, to promote the development of the agricultural, horticultural, pastoral and indus-

trial resources of the Colony; the interests of planters and others engaged in the cultivation of the soil; and to establish relations with kindred associations for the purpose of promoting the exchange of plants, seeds, and relative papers and reports. The first annual meeting of the association was formally opened by Mr. Thurston, the Acting-Governor, with a most interesting inaugural address, at the close of which he distributed among the members a large quantity of fruits, seeds, and plants which he believed might be profitably cultivated in such soil and climate as Fiji possessed.

Mr. Thurston was not only an enthusiastic student of botany, but he had admittedly a more extensive and varied experience in the cultivation of tropical plants in Fiji than any other colonist possessed. Through his wise and patriotic efforts various kinds of sugar-cane were introduced from Mauritius and Jamaica, as well as a miscellaneous collection of seeds of great economic worth.

He had, with the Governor's permission, selected a site for Botanic Gardens at Suva, in 1883. He had formed nurseries, and carried on a system of experimental culture in the interests of the Colony; and from his own valuable collection of plants he sent cuttings and seeds to friends and botanists almost the wide world over. There was no one who did so much as he did in the direction

of securing and distributing valuable contributions which, with favourable conditions, would add materially to the productive power and wealth of the country. His correspondence on this subject was, for many years, continuous and voluminous. The Agricultural Association placed on its records that it "had received from Mr. Thurston, in his official capacity, the greatest consideration and encouragement, and in his private capacity the most cordial and sympathetic assistance."

The first of a series of Exhibitions held under the auspices of the Association, was opened with fitting ceremony by the Governor on 9th November, 1888, and marked a distinct epoch in the history of the Colony. It awakened a widespread interest, diffused information of an important nature, created a feeling of healthful emulation amongst the planters, and presented to the public eye the marvellous capabilities of production which their soil and climate possessed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Samoa and its Troubles.

SIR JOHN THURSTON, who had been gazetted K.C.M.G. in May, 1887, left Fiji for the United States in the following month, under commission from the British Government to attend a conference of representatives of Great Britain, the United States of America, and Germany to be held at Washington, to consider matters affecting the interests of the Samoan group. His intimate familiarity with the whole history of the Samoan troubles and the exact nature of the issues involved, enabled him to render signal service on that occasion, and to safeguard British interests from the encroachments of German traders who, in pursuit of commercial gains, had established themselves on some of the more important islands of the group.

In the midst of her political distractions, Samoa, tossed like a ship in stormy waters, had looked across at Fiji, soon after the Cession, and

wondered whether she, too, might not find peace and security under the flag that had brought tranquil days to Thakombau. A deputation of chiefs representing the various conflicting parties, therefore, presented themselves at Nasova to discuss the subject of British protection, and to see for themselves what sort of fruits it was bearing for the people of Fiji. When they had interviewed the Governor on the subject of their mission, they were sent on to Bau, to get further information from the native chiefs. The dissensions and political complications of Samoa, however, were too serious to permit of any practical movement being made in the direction indicated.

Samoan history, like that of some of the other South Pacific Archipelagoes, has been marked by the frequency and fierceness of inter-tribal strifes ; and contact with the influences of Western civilization seems, in this case, to have accented rather than blunted the force of those ancient feuds. From the first the three great Powers, Great Britain, the United States, and Germany had their own conflicting interests on the group, with their battleships in Apia Harbor grimly on the watch for the protection of these. But the bold aggressiveness of German traders, backed by their national lust for Colonial expansion, fomented serious troubles among the native race. With a scornful contempt for international obligations,

they asserted arbitrary rights in neutral territory, and assumed to control the political and commercial affairs of the group.

Laupepa Malietoa, a man of high and noble qualities, and of lofty patriotic spirit, was generally recognized as King of Samoa, but his claims were disputed by a pretender, Tamasese, the son of a high chief, Moega-gogo, of Atua Upolu. A fierce conflict ensued, in which an American adventurer strongly supported the cause of Tamasese. At the close of this contest, which had continued for a considerable time, and when matters seemed to be peacefully settled, and a stable government of liberal form established, Malietoa was exposed to further serious trouble, caused by the German Consul, who was supported in his action by some of the warships of his nation. The King, refusing to yield supremacy to these foreigners, or to become a mere puppet in their hands, was seized and deported to a German Colony, and Tamasese was appointed to reign in his stead. This high-handed action was stubbornly resisted by another chief of Atua, Mataafa, a cousin of Malietoa, who preferred a superior claim to the throne to that of Tamasese. The Germans attempted to suppress this rising, and to capture Mataafa, but they were defeated in the engagement with heavy loss. The British and American Governments interposed in time to save the country from impending disaster; and a Con-

ference was called at Berlin, at which a scheme was drafted for the future government of the group.

The Samoan treaty was plainly framed, to a large extent, in the interests of the Samoan people. The country was independent, but in a necessarily limited sense. Malietoa, who had been deported by instructions from the German Chancellor, was reinstated in his royal dignity, and the natives were left free to elect his successor, and to frame their general laws in harmony with their own ideals. Three important provisions were included in the treaty, however, with the view of rescuing the Samoans from themselves, and from that doom of extinction which too commonly overtakes a dark and inferior race when brought into living touch with the influences of Western civilization. The importation of fire-arms into Samoa was strictly forbidden ; no intoxicants were permitted to be sold to the natives under adequate penalties, including imprisonment ; and a third and equally important article prohibited the alienation of lands in Samoa to the citizens or subjects of foreign countries.

The Islands were placed under the joint Protectorate of the three great Powers who signed the treaty. The group was proclaimed to be neutral territory in which the subjects of the signatory powers were declared to have equal rights of resi-

dence, trade and protection. A new office was created—that of Chief Justice—to which was attached a salary of £1,200 a year. This functionary was the nominee of the Governments forming the Protectorate, and all proceedings affecting foreigners were withdrawn from the Native Courts and placed under his jurisdiction. Apia, the Capital, with an encircling belt of territory, was neutralised—withdrawn, that is, from native jurisdiction and made an International port under a municipal magistrate. The right of the native authorities to tax foreign imports was strictly limited. The three negotiating Powers bound themselves not to exercise any separate control over the Islands or their government.

The Samoans by this treaty were protected from mischievous interference from without, and sufficient machinery of civilized law was set up to provide for the protection of life and property, and for the settlement of all disputes between the subjects of Foreign Powers.

Thus, mainly through the influence of the great American Republic, German arrogance and bluster sustained a humiliating defeat. Then, for the first time, the plenipotentiaries of the United States entered an appearance at the Council table of the great European Powers for the purpose of enforcing treaty obligations, and defending the

imperilled rights of the remnant of a once vigorous native race in one of the island-groups of the South Pacific.

The Crown in Samoa was both hereditary and elective, the chosen ruler being always of royal descent. After his election he receives the official title of Malietoa. Mataafa, who was one of the most romantic figures in Samoan history, of noble personality, brave in war, and extremely popular, was stirred by a restless panting ambition to win the crown, but, mainly through German influence exerted strongly on behalf of Laupepa, he missed the object on which his heart was set. Forecasting the troubles which it would entail, he strenuously opposed the triple system of government, and petitioned the United States to establish a Protectorate over his country. Baffled in his hopes of winning the kingdom, he became a centre of disaffection and political ferment, formed a military camp, drilled his native troops, and lived continually amid the clash of arms.

In March, 1889, when the Samoans were in a condition of unrest and brooding discontent, and when seven warships—three German, three American and one British—lay in Apia Harbour, keenly watching each other's movements, a disastrous hurricane swept the seas, tossed into hopeless wreckage the American and German fleets, and

strewed with dead marines the island shores. The "Calliope" alone, under the splendid handling of her brave Commander Kane and his gallant crew, escaped from the awful tempest sorely scarred and buffeted by its fury. The Islanders, forgetting their grudge against the Germans, showed hospitality and kindness to those of that nation who survived the perils of the sea, and gave proof of the power of Christian principle that ruled within them. To that calamity the poor Samoans owed a brief respite from foreign trouble. But official incapacity and political intrigues exasperated anew the native race. In the year 1893 Mataafa broke into open revolt, and plunged his country into civil war. The battleships were, however, too strong for him; his power was broken, and he, along with some of his followers, was exiled to the Marshall Islands. There he was detained for some time. On the death of Malietoa he was permitted to return to Samoa, on giving a pledge that there would be no renewal of his plots to secure the throne.

It was a strange thing, in view of his avowed ambition, to restore him to his country at such a crisis in its history; but the most unaccountable thing of all was, that Germany should, in defiance of treaty obligations, support Mataafa with all her power against Tanu, the son of the old Malietoa, who, in compliance with all the requirements

of the Constitution, had been chosen to sit upon the throne.

It now became clear that the system of Government which had been brought into experimental operation had broken down disastrously. The tripartite control of Samoa, like the dual Protectorate over the New Hebrides, produced not only irritation and racial discord, but checked the material progress and development of a country which would have been happy and prosperous under a liberal and enlightened form of rule. The election of a successor to Laupepa Malietoa was marked by turbulence and fierce hostilities which made Apia a scene of violent strife. The Supreme Court, which was required under the Berlin treaty to decide disputes as to the succession to the ruling power, sat hearing evidence for about eleven days. The consuls of the three Great Powers were in close attendance during most of that time. But two days before the finding was announced, the German Consul withdrew; and when, on 31st December, 1898, the Court gave judgment in favour of Tanu, and declared that he was duly elected Malietoa, the Germans refused to recognize him, and declined to agree to any proclamation on his behalf. They gave open encouragement to the disappointed faction of Mataafa, who resorted to arms, swept the constituted authorities aside, and organized a provisional Government in their place.

The British and American Consuls, firmly supported by a British warship, were fully equal to the occasion. They rescued Chief Justice Chambers and Tanu, whose lives were in peril, vindicated the Constitution, and repressed the disorders which had risen to a serious head.

The feeling in the Australian nation was strong against German domination in the Samoan group. Though the Germans owned more land there than the subjects of any other power, and therefore took the lead in exports, yet the British traders transacted more than half the export business, and, along with the Americans, had seven-eighths of the shipping other than inter-island traffic. Fully one-half the number of the white population were British subjects, and to the Christian enterprise of our own nation, those islands were indebted for the gracious influences that lifted them out of barbarism into the recognition and pursuit of purer ideals than had ever been presented to them before. The natives themselves desired to be under a British Protectorate. They had been convinced of the advantages that would accrue from that since the deputation of chiefs had visited Levuka in the early days of the Cession of Fiji. And had it not been for the perplexing entanglement of interests of the three great Powers in Samoa, its annexation to Great Britain would, in all probability, have become an accomplished fact.

But Teutonic statecraft prevailed ; and on the 9th November, 1899, the British Government announced that a treaty had been concluded by which all British interests and claims in Samoa were surrendered to Germany in return for territorial concessions made by that country to our own in the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Africa, the United States being content to receive the island of Tutuila.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sir Charles Mitchell's Administration.

SIR CHARLES MITCHELL succeeded Sir Wm. Des Voeux as Governor of Fiji, and arrived at Suva on Sunday morning, 2nd January, 1887. Later on, both there and at Levuka, he received the usual addresses of welcome and assurances of loyalty to the Throne. He addressed himself with energy and intelligence to the performance of the duties of his office, and made a favourable impression on the body of the people by the generous sympathy which he manifested with them in the evil times that seemed to have fallen on the Colony, checking the spirit of enterprise, dulling competition, and arresting the progress of trade.

Sir John Thurston, as we have seen above, proceeded to Washington under instructions from the British Government, to attend a Conference on Samoan affairs. At the close of his labours there he went on to London, where the affairs of his own Colony engaged the earnest and best attention

of the Colonial Office. The great question of policy affecting so closely the interests of the country, and especially the well-being of the native race, then received very full and exhaustive consideration. Sir John Thurston's personality, his strong character and convictions, and the broad practical wisdom of his counsels, powerfully impressed the Government. There was no doubt felt that a crisis in the history of the Colony was rapidly approaching, and that it was of the utmost importance that it should work out its destiny under the guidance and control of one who had not only a firm hand and a wise, clear head, but who had also large experience and a full knowledge of all the conflicting elements and interests which had to be considered and, if possible, reconciled—one who would give himself, not perfunctorily, but with something like enthusiastic devotion to the development of the resources of the Colony which he ruled. There was no man known to the Colonial Office so splendidly qualified for the appointment as Sir John Thurston; and, with expressions of entire confidence in his competency for the position, it was urgently pressed on his acceptance.

Some years previously he had asked for the appointment and had been refused; and now that it had come to him unsolicited, he did not immediately accept it. He knew the difficulties of the

position, the financial burdens that encumbered the Colony, the discontent that prevailed in a section of the community, the irritation with which the native policy was viewed—he knew all that, and therefore he did not at once decide, and was allowed some time to consider the matter. At the end of five days he came to a definite decision, and, subordinating his private feelings to a high sense of public duty, he announced his willingness to accept the onerous office of Governor of Fiji.

In the Colony, meanwhile, where a shrinking revenue and languishing trade accented the existing distress, especially among the smaller planters, who in happier times were important contributories to the general prosperity, the people looked abroad for some relief from the burdens that weighed upon them. An abnormal prosperity born of cheap money and the inflated values put on properties, attracted their eyes to Victoria; and, believing that annexation to that Colony would open channels through which some of its superfluous wealth might be diverted to Fiji, they held, in August, 1887, large and enthusiastic meetings in Levuka and Suva in furtherance of the object which they set before them. A memorial was prepared to be presented to the Parliament of Victoria, praying that steps might be taken to establish the desired relationship between the Colonies, and a special deputy was appointed to represent the

petitioners' views, and to secure for the movement the sympathy and support of the more notable and leading public men in Melbourne.

In November following, Sir Charles Mitchell had an unpleasant and unpopular task to perform. The financial condition of the Colony had made retrenchment on all sides absolutely imperative. He therefore invited the Civil Servants to meet him in the drawing-room at Government House, and there he announced to them that, "consequent upon the grave exigencies of the moment, it had become necessary to tax all official salaries at even a higher rate than had been previously fixed; and that, from the beginning of the year 1888, the tax would be imposed." But there was a promise given to them at the same time that the deductions so made should be re-paid to them in full, "whenever the financial circumstances of the Colony would permit."

In December, 1887, the announcement reached the Colony that Sir Charles Mitchell had been promoted to one of the West Indian Colonies, and that Sir J. B. Thurston was appointed to succeed him as Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner of the Western Pacific. A very small section of the community resented the appointment—spoke somewhat scornfully of it, and predicted disaster as the inevitable result. But, generally, it was

hailed with unbounded satisfaction as the turning point in the lane of adversity along which they had been travelling ; it was accepted as a sign and pledge that the affairs of the Colony would now be wisely and economically administered, and its best interests effectively served.

Sir Charles Mitchell had held office for only twelve months, during which he had proved himself to be a good and able administrator ; his affability and candour had won the respect of the people. They commended the intelligent interest which he had displayed in public affairs and the firmness with which he had effected reforms, and received with regret the announcement of his removal from among them. In the absence from the Colony of Sir John Thurston, the Hon. William Macgregor, C.M.G., administered the Government.

CHAPTER XXV.

Deportation of a Premier.

SIR JOHN THURSTON arrived at Suva in February, 1888, and received a welcome more gratifying and complete than had ever been accorded to any previous Governor. Levuka and Taviuni vied with the Capital in the enthusiasm and cordiality of the reception given to him. Representative Associations—Religious, Industrial and Social—presented him with addresses that testified to their loyalty, and assured him of their co-operation and assistance in promoting the best interests of the Colony. His Excellency, in his replies, made a most favourable impression on all classes of the community, and convinced them that no efforts would be spared on his part to secure their real and sincere sympathy with the important work which lay to his hand to accomplish. Early in the following month great public banquets were tendered to him, both at Suva and Levuka, at which most of the leading Colonists assembled to do him honour.

He devoted himself with ardour to his duties, never flinching from any difficult or irksome task that might contribute to the development of the resources or to the expansion of the trade of the Islands. He formulated a financial policy which aimed at equalizing the available assets and liabilities, and, as we shall see later on, by the observance of the most rigid economy in all departments of the State, his efforts were crowned with a large measure of success. But his exhausting labours told upon his health, and, early in 1890, he went to Sydney for six months to seek the needed relaxation from active duty.

Troubles now loomed in Tonga, which demanded his immediate attention as High Commissioner for the South Pacific. That office gave him jurisdiction over every British subject resident in any island in which no recognized and stable form of government existed. The intervention of a strong hand was now required at Tonga, to put down an intolerable tyranny which sullied the honour of the British name, violated the consciences of the people, and was goading them into reckless revolt against their rulers.

The Tongans are acknowledged to be the most gifted and high-spirited race among all the tribes of the Pacific. Their evangelization was the work of agents of the Methodist Church. Mr. Shirley

Baker, one of the missionaries stationed there, developed political ambitions to which he seemed to subordinate the high duties of his sacred office, and he laboured in a crude and incompetent fashion to build up those evangelized tribes into a compact and civilized State. He entangled himself so much with native politics that, in the interests of the Mission, the severance of his official connection with it was deemed desirable. He resented the action of the conference, and set himself in active and virulent opposition to it.

King George had for some time expressed a desire that Tonga should be constituted a separate conference, having control over its own finances. Large sums of money passed annually out of the country over and above the cost of local expenditure ; and the Tongan Church claimed to have a voice in the disposal of its own revenues. But the Australian Conference, perhaps for wise reasons, resisted that demand. Mr. Baker, who was Premier, and filled many important public offices besides, had almost boundless influence over the King and his Chiefs, and he organized, with their sanction and support, a National Church, which he used all the power of the State to popularize and advance. He believed he had reason to congratulate himself on the measure of his success. The movement seemed to spread and grow, until he could count sixteen thousand adherents on his

side, while in the depleted chapels of his foes barely four thousand could be found.

But his methods of allurement bore the stamp of a narrow bigotry. The new cause was recruited by disabilities, imprisonment and exile, which forced many to pass over to it, leaving their convictions and affections on the other side. The marvel was that a man of Mr. Baker's apparent astuteness seemed unable to forecast the natural issue of such short-sighted tyranny. It provoked in the native race a spreading discontent with his rule, which culminated in a plot to take his life.

On January 5th, 1887, while driving home in the dusk with two of his family, some shots were fired, which wounded the children, but Mr. Baker himself was unhurt. Affecting to believe that this was the outcome of a widespread conspiracy among his Methodist enemies to assassinate him, he caused many of them to be arrested. Some, including the actual perpetrators of the crime, were put on trial and condemned to death, while four men were taken to Malinoa island and summarily shot. Others would have shared the same fate had the Europeans not interfered and taken bold measures for their defence.

The public mind had reached a state of acute tension when the High Commissioner, Sir Charles Mitchell, arrived from Fiji. He made an

exhaustive judicial inquiry into the causes of the irritation and disaffection that prevailed, and, though he was empowered by the Order-in-Council under which he acted to remove the Premier from his place, yet, believing that such an act might cause serious complications and disturbance in the State, he exacted a promise from the King that persecution of those who adhered to the Methodist Church should cease, and that certain specified reforms should be immediately carried out. Constrained to be content with this settlement of the trouble, he returned to Fiji, carrying with him the remaining prisoners who were lying under sentence of death for the attack on the Premier.

Mr. Baker, waxing bold by this lenient dealing with him, published in a Blue-book a report of the attack which had been made upon his life. It was embroidered with sensational charges against both the High Commissioner and the British Vice-Consul, which, however, were shown to be absolutely baseless, and he was forced to make a humbling retraction of them.

The King's promises were not fulfilled, and things were drifting towards a crisis. Sir John Thurston, who now held the reins of power, felt that immediate and courageous action was needed to save the country from panic and disaster. He therefore sailed for Tonga in the warship "Rapid,"

and landed on 3rd July, 1890. At his first interview with the King, finding that Mr. Baker was the only other official present, the High Commissioner declined to proceed to business, as he desired the presence of the great Chiefs, most of whom, he believed, were strongly opposed to the Premier's policy. Some of them subsequently called upon him, and expressed their desire for the removal of the man who had usurped all real power in the kingdom, whose presence, they declared, endangered the preservation of peace and order, and whose persecuting fury was straining to the point of breaking the bonds of loyalty to the throne.

The High Commissioner had several interviews with both King and Premier, and the truth of the charges preferred against the latter being fully established, he decided, after the most careful and anxious consideration of the case in all its aspects, that it was one which demanded the exercise of his authority. He therefore expelled Mr. Baker from the palace in which he had taken up his residence ; guards of marines were placed over all the public offices ; a royal proclamation was issued dismissing the Premier from office, and appointing a native official in his place. An order was signed prohibiting Mr. Baker from remaining in Tonga after the 17th of the month, when the mail steamer would leave for New Zealand, and banishing him from the country for a period of two years.

Arrangements were then made for the establishment of a government to be administered by officials of the native race.

The situation at Tonga was grave enough, and amply justified the High Commissioner's energetic interference. No taxes had come in for some time; the public debt was rapidly accumulating; for nine months no salaries had been paid to those who were employed in the service of the State, and a cruel despotism had ruled the land.

The High Commissioner asked the King to allow those who had been exiled for conscience' sake to return to their homes. He replied under visible emotion :—"I never sent them away; I did not want them to go. Let them come back. They were driven away. Bring them back to their friends."

The German Consular Agent and the French Clergy all expressed approval of the action of the High Commissioner. The Roman Catholic natives and many of the members of the Free Church waited on him and thanked him cordially for rescuing their country from the blighting influence that had fallen upon it. The King expressed his own thankfulness and joy, and the joy of his people at the new dawn of an era of peace which they were permitted to see. At the request of the High

Commissioner he proclaimed that there should be freedom of worship throughout his kingdom, that those who were imprisoned without trial and without being convicted of any crime should at once be liberated, and that all Tongan exiles should have liberty to return to their own land.

Sir John Thurston and his staff landed at the invitation of the King, and received public thanks for the eminent services which had been rendered to the country. And on the 17th July, after a residence on the Islands extending over a period of thirteen years, Mr. Baker left for New Zealand with a record of grand opportunities lost and great abilities misapplied.

Thus Sir John Thurston re-established British influence at Tonga, and saved that fair group of islands from bankruptcy and civil war, and—wider reaching than that—rendered an important service to the honour of the British name and to the cause of civilization and humanity the wide world over.

The emancipation of Tonga and its King from the evil rule of Shirley Baker was the occasion of much rejoicing to the friends of civil and religious liberty in the Australian Colonies. A great thanksgiving meeting was held on the 6th August, 1890, in the Centennial Hall, Sydney, when the event was celebrated with the greatest enthusiasm. "The good offices of Sir

John Thurston in bringing about the new and welcome state of things were warmly and gratefully acknowledged ; and a resolution embodying the feeling of the meeting was adopted with a view of being forwarded to the British Government."

On the 15th of the same month there was a solemn and impressive function at Government House, Suva, when the Tongan exiles, who had been brought from Koro, numbering one hundred and twenty persons (including Charlotte, the old King's only surviving daughter), had a farewell interview with Sir John and Lady Thurston prior to returning to their own land. With touching demonstrations of emotion they expressed their gratitude to the High Commissioner, at whose request the Rev. Mr. Lindsay engaged in prayer, offering hearty thanks for the restoration of peace and freedom of conscience in Tonga, and for the liberation of all exiles and prisoners for conscience' sake—a prayer in which all the assembled Tongans devoutly joined. On the following day, in the presence of a large number of people, and loaded with gifts presented to them by their Fijian friends, after an exile covering a period of three years, they sailed for their own homes.

Sir John Thurston sent to Tonga by the same boat that carried the exiles, Mr. Basil Thomson, as adviser to the aged King George, whose political

affairs he entirely re-modelled, and who has given us in "The Diversions of a Prime Minister," a graphic and racy account of the formidable difficulties that fronted him in the work which he had to do.

A year later the High Commissioner visited Tonga in the warship "Cordelia," and had every reason to be thankful for the happy issues of the wise and bold course which he had taken in connection with the Baker troubles, and for the marked success which had crowned the efforts of the tactful and efficient officer whom he had appointed to the responsible position of Adviser to the King.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The New Hebrides and Difficulties of Dual Control.

THE New Hebrides' Group geographically lies in to Australia; and as our enterprise and gold have largely contributed to the evangelization of many of the natives, we believe our claim to the islands rests on a sounder basis than that of any other nation. In September, 1886, when Mr. Thurston was Lieut.-Governor and Acting High Commissioner, the French Republic, thirsting for Colonial expansion, having exhausted the resources of diplomacy to acquire possession of the New Hebrides, made a bold stroke for annexation by landing a body of troops at Havannah Harbour, with the purpose of seizing by force a tract of land the proprietary right to which was in dispute between certain French and British settlers. Dr. Daniel Macdonald, who represented the latter, intervened to such good purpose that, at the suggestion of Admiral Fairfax, a temporary agreement was arrived at with which both parties were

constrained for a time to be content. And Mr. Thurston, who knew the value of the Islands to the Australian Commonwealth, and keenly watched every movement that aimed to alienate them from British influence and control, addressed a strong protest on the subject to the Victorian Premier.

It was felt throughout these States that it would be a political blunder of the first magnitude to allow the Islands to fall into the hands of any Foreign Power. And it seems now quite clear that it was the vigorous action then taken by the Government of Victoria, under pressure of a strongly pronounced public opinion which took emphatic voice at a great meeting held in Melbourne, that forced the hands of the Imperial authorities, and led to the rejection of the French proposal for the cession of the New Hebrides in exchange for the island of Rapa. The troops were immediately withdrawn, and the Islands were placed under the dual control of the Governments of Great Britain and France. The effect of the mutual exclusion of Government action, however, has been an effective bar to material progress, in so far as it has increased the difficulty of acquiring valid titles to land.

But in spite of the agreement that was entered into, the French have made supreme and persistent efforts to push British settlers out ; and they have

been aided in their apparent design by the narrow ungenerous policy pursued by our Commonwealth. The French scheme of Colonization is carried out by a powerful Chartered Company, who receive an annual subsidy of £16,000 to promote national interests in the Islands. They have been steadily enlarging their area of occupation by purchasing properties from traders who are willing to sell. They have acquired possession of the choicest harbour sites, fenced off extensive plantations, and claim large blocks of land, which, they allege, have been purchased from native chiefs. Settlement under their auspices is proceeding apace, a grant of £200 being paid to every Colonist under their scheme ; a steam service between Noumea and Vila is subsidized to the amount of £2,000 annually ; and the Islands have been placed with respect to their produce on the most favoured basis of a French Colony—their produce being admitted into New Caledonia practically duty free.

The Commonwealth of Australia has done something to improve commercial relations with the group. It has subsidized a line of steamers, so that more regular and rapid communication has been secured. And, in connection with that movement, in order to promote the growth of an Australian interest, the "Australasian New Hebrides Company" was formed in the year 1888. Many of its original shareholders were leading business men

in Melbourne. It is now very largely in the hands of Messrs. Burns, Philp & Co., Limited, of Sydney, whose headquarters in the islands are at Vila. Under this scheme of settlement a large number of Australians, full of enterprise and daring, took up land and set to work to cultivate it, hopeful of success. But many of them were discouraged by difficulties that emerged from an unexpected quarter. As the cocoanut tree takes full six years before it comes into bearing, planters depend mainly on maize crops for immediate returns, but they were filled with dismay when they found the Australian market closed against them by a practically prohibitive duty of forty per cent. on maize, and heavy charges on other produce. Such imposts have almost extinguished the trade between Sydney and the islands.

Dr. D. Macdonald, of Efate, who has all along firmly checked Gallic aggressiveness, writes, under date, "Havannah Harbour, July, 1904. I cannot say that the new Settlement Scheme has so far resulted in any great or sufficient increase to the British population of the group ; and there is much dissatisfaction at the difficulty of getting labour and the chaotic state of things generally as between the British and French, and the Europeans and the natives. The French aggressions here, which caused me to visit Australia in January, are still going on. Our British authorities have so far failed to

put a stop to them, or to protect us from them in our just rights as British subjects. The British name is being dishonoured and British interests threatened with extinction now again, as formerly in 1886-7."

The outlook at present is distinctly depressing. Many of the British settlers, owing to the difficulties of their position, have abandoned their holdings and left the country. Public meetings were held in Melbourne to support a proposal that was made to relieve settlers from the burdens imposed on them by the Commonwealth tariff, and Captain Rason, the British Resident Commissioner, chartered a schooner, intending to visit the British settlers in the group and ascertain whether anything could be done to advance their interests.

Disputes regarding their proprietary rights to the land they occupied have caused continuous irritation and disquietude to the people on the islands. The Federal Ministry urged on the Imperial Government the appointment of some tribunal to adjudicate on conflicting claims. The appointment of a Naval Commission was suggested by France in 1901 ; but the British Government replied that naval officers are not suitable for the investigation of land claims, which might involve long and difficult inquiries, and suggested the appointment of a special commission consisting of

trained lawyers. But nothing definite was done till early in 1904, when a message reached us by cable that the two nations specially interested had agreed to the principle of appointing a joint commission to proceed to the New Hebrides for the purpose of "negotiating the terms of reference of the various questions in dispute"—the Commission to have power to adjust conflicting land claims, a subject which is outside the jurisdiction of any existing tribunals. But official machinery moves slowly, and, impatient of delay, the French Company, a few months later (June, 1904), were pursuing their old aggressive policy, and violating the agreement entered into in November, 1887, regarding the land at Havannah Harbour.

Some time ago a proposal was made by the French settlers, and supported by the Chamber of Deputies in Paris, that the Islands should be partitioned between France and Australia. But that may be dismissed as an impossible solution of the difficulty. There are about 500 white settlers on the group, of whom 200 are British and the remainder French ; and these latter, in conjunction with their countrymen in New Caledonia, have boldly petitioned their Government to proclaim a protectorate over the group. The committee on Foreign Affairs, it is stated, has considered and reported on this petition, giving reasons in favour of the establishment of such a protectorate,

explaining the inconveniences of the present situation, and expressing the conviction that a solution of the question is desirable as much in the interests of foreign residents in the New Hebrides as of the French settlers. "There are two methods," the report continues, "of solving the difficulty—one is annexation out and out—the other is the declaration of a protectorate. In either case the New Hebrides should be attached politically to New Caledonia." Were that to happen it would be a dire calamity to the natives, as the story of the Lifu Mission has emphatically taught us. It would also be a monstrous wrong to Australia and to the Christian enterprise of our nation, whose martyr-blood and treasures of gold have done so much to evangelize and civilize those dying tribes.

It is clear enough that the present scheme of dual control is working mischievously ; and it must speedily come to an end. There is no settled harmonious policy in dealing with the natives who are rapidly hastening on to extinction, and it is the general opinion that under existing conditions the group will make no progress on the lines of a large and stable material prosperity. The establishment of a dual Government might work well, but where there are such marked differences of temperament in the two ruling races—accentuated as they are by traditional and educational influences —there would be little hope of avoiding friction and

strife, both in the general policy and in the practical details of Government.

Very little, so far, has been done towards the systematic development of the resources of the islands. In those lands lying within a few days' sail of our principal ports, almost all tropical fruits are indigenous, or, if introduced, can be cultivated with marked success. Given cheap labour and open markets, and easy means of transport to them, a prosperous future would be assured. But so far there has been marvellously little accomplished by British enterprise, and only small and cautious investments made of British capital. Round the islands there are a good many holdings occupied by small planters, whose staple industry is the manufacture of copra, and whose income is supplemented by a little trading with the natives. But they have neither the capital nor the energy to create any large volume of foreign trade, and to establish industries which would attract population and wealth, and give the islands an important place among the producing countries of the world. No more profitable field for investment can be found anywhere than on some of those fertile slopes, where coffee of prime quality can be produced and placed at good profit even at the prices which now rule in these States. We import that product largely from Brazil, Ceylon, and the West Indies, while, at a few days' sail from our own

ports, large areas of land are lying waste which, if reclaimed and cultivated, would more than supply the markets of Australasia. The Islands are admirably adapted also for the culture of cocoa and vanilla, and other products which are always in good demand.

An important decision regarding Australia's policy in the Pacific was arrived at in the House of Representatives on 10th August, 1905. After an interesting debate on the control of the New Hebrides, the following motion was unanimously agreed to :—"That the representations already made by the Governments of the Commonwealth to the British Government in regard to the New Hebrides should, in the interests of the natives, the settlers, and Australia, be renewed and strengthened.

"That the immediate establishment of the joint land commission is imperative, and that the Commission should be so constituted that its decisions may be just, prompt, and effective.

"That the delay which has taken place in connection with a settlement of the New Hebrides questions is deeply regretted ; that no settlement will be satisfactory to the Commonwealth which does not decide the possession of the group ; and that the only ownership which can be acceptable to

Australia is that of Great Britain, which ownership is justified by the history of the discovery, development and trade of the islands, and by the wishes of the native population."

That is an important step in the right direction; and now consistency requires that Parliament follow it up by a material reduction in the high tariff charges at present imposed on New Hebrides produce.

In March, 1906, information reached the Commonwealth that a draft agreement had been arrived at by the Anglo-French Commission, which has evolved a scheme under which effective control should be exercised over both French and British residents by French and British tribunals; and, what is still more important, has devised means of adjudicating in a mixed court upon disputed land titles. But there are indications that, owing to the policy steadily pursued by France for some years past of building up and concentrating French planting communities, which, according to this scheme can be brought under municipal control, the advantage of the proposed scheme of dual government will lie largely on the side of France. The natives, who are more vitally interested in this question than any others, and to whom all the lands originally belonged, seem to be left out of count, so far as our information goes, in the draft agreement now made public.

Mr. C. M. Woodford, Government Resident in the Solomon Islands, gives a most hopeful report of the progress of the Group under British protection. Though there are only 100 white persons in the 11,000 square miles embraced by the Solomon's protectorate, the production has doubled during the past four years, the exports now reaching a value of £40,000. Up to the present time the exports—ivory nut, tortoise-shell and copra—have been wholly the produce of plantations not only worked, but owned, by natives. During the last two years a large number of plantations have been begun by white people, and as these will shortly be in bearing, the output in four years' time will probably double that of to-day. There are large areas suitable for sugar, but so far the cane has not been planted. Messrs. Lever Brothers, the proprietors of the Sunlight Soap Works, have recently secured 50,000 acres of land on which they intend to grow the copra used in their manufactures.

The social condition of the islanders has greatly improved in recent years. All offenders against the law work on a Government copra plantation, and their labour is turned to useful account. Messrs. Burns, Philp & Co., the enterprising ship owners, of Sydney, have done a great deal to develop the trade of the islands.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Dr. (now Sir) William Macgregor.

IN the year 1873, when Sir Arthur Gordon was Governor of Mauritius, he required a medical man for the Seychelles Islands, which form the most important of the dependencies of the Colony of Mauritius, and he asked a friend in England to make a suitable selection for him. The appointment was offered to Dr. William Macgregor, whose academic career had been a distinguished one. Born in the year 1846, he had taken his medical degree at Aberdeen, where he won the Watson Gold Medal; he had attended lectures also at Glasgow, Berlin and Paris. Fired with a desire to escape from the narrow limitations and crowded professional walks of the Homeland, he closed with the offer that was made to him, and sailed for his new field of labour, where his strong intellect and large capacity for work soon attracted the notice of the Governor. "He was not only the medical officer," Lord Stanmore testified, "but the life and soul of all the work that had to be done there."

His energies were variously employed as Inspector of Schools, Inspector of Liberated Africans employed in Planting, as Magistrate, and in various other offices, which he efficiently filled. "With perfect courage and tact he managed, as no other man would have done, to get work accomplished under difficulties of no ordinary kind."

When Sir Arthur Gordon went to Fiji he cast about for competent men to whom he might give the more important appointments in the Colony which he was about to rule. Dr. Macgregor accepted the position offered to him as Chief Medical Officer of Fiji. But the qualities which fitted him to shine in political life were not one whit inferior to those which distinguished him in his own profession. In the year 1875, when the mountain tribes of Viti Levu rose in insurrection against British rule, Dr. Macgregor was engaged in suppressing the revolt, and received from the Government the sum of two hundred pounds in acknowledgment of the services which he rendered on that occasion. In every department of State which he was called to administer, he displayed an assiduity and zeal and rare efficiency which won for him the public respect, as well as the hearty approval of his superior officers; and his services outside his professional duties were largely availed of to the obvious advantage of Colonial interests. There was hardly a public office, outside the

department of law, which Dr. Macgregor at subsequent periods of his Colonial career was not appointed to fill, in all of which he so ably acquitted himself and so won the respect of his fellow-colonists, that he abundantly justified Sir Arthur Gordon's selection of him to fill important offices of trust in the State. "He worked with a most thorough conscientious devotion to duty," Lord Stanmore said, "a most untiring energy, and most unselfish courage."

The Imperial Government made graceful recognition of his merit by bestowing on him the honour of C.M.G. ; and in July, 1882, on the eve of his departure for Great Britain on twelve months' furlough, his fellow-colonists, in expression of their appreciation of his personal and public worth, entertained him at a banquet in the Planters' Club Hotel, at Levuka. On that occasion the highest testimony was borne to the indomitable energy and ability which he had always brought to the performance of public duty, not only as Chief Medical Officer, but also as Receiver-General, and Acting Colonial Secretary, and in all other important public offices which he had been called to fill.

In the year following his return to Fiji he gave striking proof of his personal courage and broad humanity, which awakened admiration, and won

for him distinction in high places. In May, 1884, the "Syria," a coolie ship, with a large number of Indian immigrants on board, was wrecked in the neighbourhood of Nasilai Point. Foremost among the rescuers of the drowning people stood Dr. Macgregor who, with a splendid daring that excited wonder, made heroic and repeated efforts to save human life. Passing eighteen or twenty times along a fragment of a mast to the ship, at great personal risk—a feat which no one else would venture to try—he was thus the means of rescuing many who must otherwise have been lost. The President of the Board of Trade recounted these gallant exploits in submitting to Her Majesty Dr. Macgregor's name for the Albert Medal, which was accordingly awarded to him.

That year he held the office of Colonial Secretary, and was appointed Commissioner of Lands. When Sir William Des Voeux left Fiji, in ill-health, in January, 1885, Dr. Macgregor, in Mr. Thurston's absence in Great Britain, became Administrator; and the manner in which he fulfilled the duties of that office extorted the warmest commendations on every side. The press, generously eulogistic of his administration of the Government, said :—"Genuine cordiality existed for the first time between the Governor and the governed. The Doctor's general ability had long commanded recognition and respect. His capacity

for work imposing either mental or physical strain had passed into a proverb ; and there existed a firm conviction of his strong disposition actively to strive for the best interests of the Colony. He devoted his energies to the efficient yet courteous discharge of his duties. It has been possible for him to continue the administration of an obnoxious policy, and still not only to decrease the friction, but actually to induce confidence and cordiality by the charm of his straightforward personal manner, and by a little judicious conciliation. As the administrator of an unpopular system, and the apparently irresponsible agent whose hands are nevertheless tied by Colonial Office instructions, the Governor of a Crown Colony has a difficult role to play. But it surely follows that it is his duty to play it as graciously as possible."

On Mr. Thurston's return from Great Britain on 1st August, 1885, Dr. Macgregor became Colonial Secretary ; and, in January of the following year, he represented his Colony at the first sittings of the Federal Council held in Hobart. In June, 1888, he left Fiji to assume the high office of Administrator of British New Guinea, a distinction to which his meritorious services fairly entitled him. Thus for thirteen years he had been one of the central figures in the political history of his Colony, a man of large capabilities and of many-sided character, caring for the wounded in the Kai Tholo wars ;

applying himself with keen and patient investigation to the discovery of remedies for vegetable diseases, which threatened disaster to the planting interests of the country ; training with such professional help as was available a band of intelligent youths to such competency in medical knowledge and practice as would make them useful in preserving or restoring the health of their countrymen; actively interesting himself in education and religion, and in all matters affecting the permanent well-being of the people. And, during all that period of thirteen years, he was charged, at one time or other, with the administration of every department of the Government, excepting the judicial branch, and so identified himself all along with the work of building up his Colony, that the Imperial Government, in evidence of its confidence in his tried ability, and in token of its approval of the distinguished services which he had rendered in the past, entrusted him with the office of Administrator of British New Guinea, an important position for which his political training in Fiji had admirably fitted him.

Dr. Macgregor's administration of the Government of British New Guinea was a marked success. Intertribal feuds and wars had almost ceased. Over large areas the natives were living in peace and order, and devoting themselves to industrial pursuits. Evil-doing was discouraged and punished,

and justice administered with an impartial hand. There are rich alluvial flats drained by rivers, which are capable of being turned to profitable account ; and hundreds of thousands of acres adapted for the cultivation of all tropical plants, but particularly rubber trees, for which there is a large and steadily increasing demand. Many miles inland, beyond these flats, are the hills in which gold has been found. The occupation of the low lands by a British Agricultural Company, it was believed, would be of great service to any mining population that might gather among the hills. It would tend to open up the country, facilitate and cheapen communication with the interior, encourage trade, and furnish a base of supplies. The profitable cultivation of the land would provide employment for the natives who, in course of time, would become themselves producers, and lift themselves, under British guidance, to an important place among the world's nations.

Sir Hugh Nelson, formerly Premier of Queensland, recently made a tour through New Guinea. On his return he spoke in glowing terms of the improved condition of the native tribes under the present beneficent rule. Where Mission Stations have been established there can be no doubt that the readiness with which the Papuans have accepted our laws has been in a large measure due to the pioneering work performed by the Christian

Missionaries who for many years have laboured among them.

The honour of K.C.M.G. was conferred on Dr. Macgregor in recognition of his services to the Empire. And from Cambridge University he received, in 1895, the honorary degree of Doctor in Science.

With respect to the concessions made to the syndicate, which have been so angrily commented upon by a section of the Australian press, Sir William Macgregor said :—"I assume the entire responsibility for the terms of the concession. I recommended them with my eyes open, after mature deliberation, and with a better knowledge of the country than any person could possibly possess for a considerable time to come. I am afraid that a good deal of misconception and misapprehension have got abroad with regard to the whole subject. My sole object has been to develop the Possession, and I am pretty sure of this, that, if more had been known about the matter less would have been said upon it." Sir William Macgregor has proved himself to be a wise and effective ruler, a vigilant guardian of Imperial interests, and at the same time profoundly sympathetic with the ignorance and weakness of the native race ; and we may well trust the soundness of his judgment in the suggestions which he has offered for the more rapid development of the resources of that great Possession of the British Crown.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Viti Levu, and its vast Agricultural Possibilities.

VITI LEVU, the largest island of the group, is, roughly speaking, about 90 miles long by about 50 miles wide, and is traversed by a mountain range that reaches a height of 4,504 feet. Its largest river, the Rewa, which in some places is half a mile wide, is navigable for forty miles by craft not exceeding twenty tons, and twenty miles beyond that distance by rafts and flat-bottomed boats. The head waters of its principal affluents have their springs in a mountainous region of distinctly volcanic origin. The basin consists generally of a series of irregular ranges or isolated hills of argillaceous composition, with alluvial flats between them or along the river banks. It debouches into the sea through five channels, one of which is traversed by a canal some two miles in length and about sixty feet wide, cut by the natives many years ago for military purposes, and with no better appliances than their digging sticks. As the

river approaches the coast it pours through miles of low-lying country, which is little more than mangrove swamps. On Nukulau Island, close inshore, are built the immigration barracks, where the coolies and natives recruited from the islands are landed, prior to their distribution among the plantations.

There is a teeming native population settled along the river. One of the villages is famed for the potteryware which it produces. Without any knowledge of the potter's wheel, the manufacturers turn out water bottles and articles of domestic use in the form of animals and fruits, which sometimes give evidence of taste and artistic finish.

On the banks of this river and its affluent streams, including the deltas formed by its debouchures, it is estimated that there are about four hundred square miles of land unrivalled in quality, and especially well adapted for growing sugar cane. So far back as the year 1882 there were from 1,500 to 2,000 acres under crop, and in some places the cane reached a height of 22 feet. In that year the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, in fulfilment of their contract with the Fijian Government, opened their mill at Nausori. The magnitude of the enterprise may be judged from the fact that, working day and night during a favourable season, the plant could, in twenty-two to twenty-four

weeks, crush from 100,000 to 110,000 tons of cane, and turn out from 8,000 to 9,000 tons of sugar. The Company's expenditure had amounted to over £250,000. The plant had cost upwards of £100,000; and in addition to the large expense incurred in providing labour, about £10,000 had been advanced to planters to enable them to furnish cane for the mill. The land was broken up originally with steam ploughs, and yielded as much as seven tons of sugar to the acre.

On the Ba River also, and in other suitable localities, large areas have been brought under successful cultivation, plantations made, and mills erected, furnishing remunerative employment to a large industrial population. Sheep-farming has also been attempted with good results. At Tawarau and other places there are sheep stations, where Merino flocks thrive well under the new conditions.

In the Rewa township of Thurston land sold, in 1881, at £100 per acre. But, in order to promote settlement, the Government, in 1889, offered allotments near Suva, of specially good quality, on lease at eight shillings per acre. This is better soil than the richest flats on the Rewa, for which a rent of fifteen shillings per acre is paid. Hill land, admirably suited for the culture of pine-apple and of citrous fruits, may be had at a more reasonable

price than that. In the valleys at the sources of the Rewa and the Singa Toka, there are hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile forest land eminently adapted for the cultivation of coffee and cocoa; and all that potential wealth is lying there waiting to be transmuted into actual coinage of the realm by the spirit of enterprise and the hand of industry. The high country of Viti Levu is healthy and bracing, and unexceptionable to Europeans on the score of climate; and the mountain and river scenery of Namosi and the Tavua Valley, with all their varied wonders of cave and cliff and of tropical softness of verdant loveliness awakens the delighted admiration of all who look upon it.

There are indications that the island has been rising slightly in recent times. That may have an important bearing on river navigation, and may force on the consideration of the Colonial authorities the question of railway communication in order to facilitate the transport of produce to the shipping port.

The interior of the country was the home of the Kai Tholos—wild tribes who inhabited inaccessible mountain fastnesses, who were the last to accept the "Lotu," and to submit themselves to British rule. They used in old days, before their power was broken by the Government, to make hostile descents on unwary and defenceless planters who

had settled on the coast, and massacre and plunder them without compunction. One of the District Wardens told me he had purchased land for a plantation from a neighbouring chief, but had hardly entered into possession when he received a message from the hills that he must evacuate the house which he had built, and resign all claim to the land, which, it was alleged, belonged to a mountain tribe. He ridiculed the intimation as an empty menace, but mentioned it in a casual way to the native vendor, who advised him to dismiss it from his thoughts. A few days later, however, the warden was using a hammer on some article of furniture at the rear of the house, and his wife, overpowered by the heat, had flung herself on a lounge within, when a movement at the doorway startled her, and, looking up, she saw some fierce-looking Kai Tholos pressing in. She uttered no cry, but seizing a revolver lying at hand, she bravely covered them. Meanwhile a detachment of the main body, hearing the sound of the hammer behind the house, closed in upon her husband, who now found other work for the implement which he held in his hand. One of his assailants lifted his ponderous club to strike, but just at that moment a sharp yell rang out from those on the other side of the house when the revolver was about to open fire upon them. That caused them to turn round for a moment. The distraction turned the tide of

battle. Stroke after stroke fell swiftly upon their defenceless bodies, and thus the warden fought his way to the front door. His wife now handed him out his rifle, with which he routed his foe. Some little distance off he had a Fijian hut in which all his goods were stored. The Kai Tholos set fire to that, burning it to the ground, and carried off with them triumphantly his favourite double-barrelled gun, which they rescued from the flames.

Those were some of the perils to which in old times the pioneers of Viti Levu were exposed from the turbulent dwellers on the hills. But now, under wise and wholesome training, those once fierce tribes have learned to apply to the peaceable pursuit of agriculture the energies that were formerly exhausted, either in harrying planters or in inter-tribal wars.

When Suva was selected as the site for the capital it consisted of only a few houses with great abandoned sugar plantations lying beyond it, cane ten feet high running wild, and a sugar mill that was rusting from disuse. The land was largely in the hands of private owners, but Sir John Thurston arranged that suitable sites for business purposes should be surveyed and offered for sale by public competition. The deserted-looking village was soon transformed into a busy centre of civic life. And the Suva of to-day is a picturesque town of

growing proportions, overlooked by the imposing block of Government buildings which occupy the heights ; while the foreground presents the usual graceful foliage and all the rich variety of colouring that give charm and beauty to a tropical scene. The town has a perfectly secure and commodious harbour, and a shipping trade that year by year is steadily advancing in volume and value, indicating that, as Sir John Thurston used to remark, when the marvellous potentialities of her soil and climate become better known, there will be no need to go to foreign tropical markets for articles of commerce which Fiji is naturally fitted to supply.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Some of the Wonders of Vanua Levu.

VANUA LEVU, or Great Land, is about ninety-five miles in length, with an average breadth of about twenty-five or thirty miles, and has a native population of from 10,000 to 12,000 persons. Passing within sight of Yedua, a small island lying off the mainland, on which there are some native towns, we drop anchor in Sandalwood Bay which, many years ago, was the scene of a busy, prosperous trade, which attracted a number of vessels from Calcutta and Manila, as well as from our Australian ports. The coast in that immediate neighbourhood is low-lying, with great mangrove swamps in the foreground, and broken hilly country behind. In old times large ships used to ride at anchor in the Bay and load with sandalwood, tortoise-shell, and beche-de-mer, which they carried direct to the Chinese market. The fragrant wood was used to burn in the temples, and in the manufacture of fancy cabinet-work, and the beche-de-mer was in great demand to make rich soups for

the sumptuous mandarins. There used to be stations ten, fifteen and twenty miles apart along the whole coast, each under the superintendence of a white man, for the curing of those molluscs for foreign markets. After some years the supply began to fail, and the stations were gradually broken up and abandoned. When the industry was resumed by the whites later on, the natives showed considerable irritation; for they regarded the beche-de-mer as the produce of their own coral reefs and belonging of right to themselves. To prevent trouble, therefore, legislative action was taken by Sir William Des Voeux, making the industry illegal, without license from the Governor. The beche-de-mer, or sea-slug, is an unsightly-looking thing, hard to the touch when cured, and greatly reduced in size in the process of drying. The sandalwood tree has become a rare enough thing there now, owing to the wanton destruction of it by the Tongans when they passed on their predatory excursions through the country. Many of them who had formed temporary settlements there, and whose restless ambitions made them an element of disturbance among the people, had been forced to return to their own islands by the British and American consuls resident in Fiji.

But the spot of supreme interest to me was Naithombothombo, the western point of Sandal-wood Bay—a spot that always inspired the old

Fijians with feelings of superstitious awe. Thence the spirits of the departed were supposed to embark for Bulu, the abode of the supreme god Dengei. It is a headland of marvellous beauty, where umbrageous trees deepen the shadows cast by beetling cliffs, whose rocky faces are richly draped with dense foliage. But it was the absolute stillness of the scene, the suggestion of deep repose, that impressed me more powerfully than anything else. The wind seemed to hush its sighing, even the plash of the waters was not heard on the strand, neither fluttering of wing nor cry of bird disturbed the intense silence that prevailed. I felt as much under the spell of a religious influence, in as deep and impressive a solitude, as I did when, years before, I stood alone in the vast Cathedral of St. Ouen, and felt as if the tide of life, not only in Rouen, but in all the world had ceased to flow.

The sail from Bua to Cocoanut Point is a very pleasant one. There is a charming picturesqueness and variety in the coast scenery which keep the interest always alive. Cocoanut groves everywhere cover the low flats, overshadowing populous native towns. Behind these groves are low, bald hills, with occasional patches of timber upon them, and back of these are ranges covered with forest. The country generally is fertile and well watered, but European settlement here is making slow advance.

There was naturally a transition stage through which the great chiefs passed subsequent to the cession, when they got sometimes "mixed" on questions of duty, and presented an undignified figure as public functionaries and representatives of British authority and law. But it is remarkable how easily, as a rule, they fell into the new order, and worthily acquitted themselves of the new obligations devolved upon them as servants of the Crown. We had an instance at Bua of an act of dishonesty on the part of a native prisoner which, a few years previously, would probably have led to a disastrous inter-tribal war. He was under the charge of the Roko of the district who sent him to Solevu to beg yangona. The Buli was reluctant to give it, and asked the messenger why they did not plant yangona for themselves at Bua? He gave him some, however, and sent him away. But the messenger did not bring the yangona to Bua. He probably presented it to some of his friends on the road, and reported to the Roko that Buli Solevu had refused to give him any. The Roko resented the alleged incivility, and ordered the prisoners under his charge to fall upon the first native of Solevu that showed his face in the town of Bua; and one Sunday night they made a violent assault on a man whom they would likely have killed, had he not been delivered out of their hands. On the following day the prisoners were tried by

the native judge, who found them guilty and imposed a penalty upon them. They pleaded in their defence that they had acted according to instructions received from their Chief, but their plea was of no avail; and the man who was the cause of the whole mischief was not, so far as I know, questioned on the subject.

Sailing along the coast past Nandi the land is lower, with wooded ranges and towering peaks away in the distance. Savu Savu Bay is one of the most interesting places in the island. It is almost enclosed with low hills and gemmed with pretty wooded islets, which lie some distance off the shore. Back inland charming landscapes open to view—wide reaches of forest country with open glades and bosky vales and patches of cultivation here and there. Beyond all these there are rugged heights cleft in places into deep gorges all richly draped in living green. As we passed up to our anchorage, picturesque family groups of natives came and stood on the shore, and gazed with eager interest at us. There is a steadily increasing European population here, and sugar plantations, with a mill in full working order.

The hot springs awakened a good deal of interest. They rise in a large natural basin which was probably at one time a crater. Little peaked hills rise here and there around it on the land side.

Hot water at a temperature of 210 degrees bubbles up to the height of nearly a foot. While a small party from the ship were looking at one of those springs the water suddenly vanished (though the bubbling sound continued underneath our feet), and broke out in other directions at a distance of only some paces from where we stood. The greater part of the salts in solution in those springs consist of chlorides of calcium and sodium. Great volumes of steam rise continually from them. It is no uncommon thing to see the natives utilizing them for the cooking of their yams and bread-fruit. A stream of cold water flows only a few paces off, and, for some distance, in a parallel direction, to one which is fed by those hot springs. The country is evidently of volcanic formation, the shore only having a coral base.

Natawa Bay—or as the natives call it, Na Waitui Mate, which means Dead Sea—at the easterly end of the island, is said to be well adapted for sugar growing, and one of my fellow-passengers had taken up 15,000 acres, which he intended to plant with cane. I met a planter who had taken up land on the slope of a hill overlooking the Somo Somo Strait. Six years previously he had planted out cocoanuts on the lower levels of his block, and he had now a fine grove fronting his house, which yielded him an income that placed him easily above anxiety and fear of want. Weekly, he gathered the

produce of his trees which, converted into copra, he readily disposed of to a passing craft. There was no mill within easy reach to crush sugar cane, but he cultivated some for his own use, prepared for the table by a rude appliance of his own construction. He had patches of coffee, kumaras, yams and taro. Flour and tea were the only stores he needed to buy—and the latter article he hoped soon to be able to produce himself. As I looked upon him and the evidences of his growing prosperity, the conviction came to me that with ordinary preseverance, industry, temperateness and self-control, a man can hardly fail to succeed in a healthy and fertile country like that.

A cricket match played on one occasion at Nangingi, on the south side of the island, which began in good humour and nearly closed in wild tragedy, proves how near the surface lie the passions that, in olden days, led to fierce inter-tribal wars. The great English game was introduced into Fiji long before the Islands were proclaimed a dependency of the British Crown ; and in course of time the natives flung themselves with ardour into that new form of sport. The Navuta men, who were good scorers, and proud of their fame, challenged the Natawa tribe to send their best team for a trial of skill at this new game. The Natawans took the field and began to play with some glint of fortune and show of courage. But

the tide soon turned, and they were badly beaten. The other side, elated with their victory, flung taunts and jeers at the defeated team, who lost their temper over it and told the Navuta men to go home and put up their fighting fences. That looked serious. It meant the flinging down to the foe of the gage of battle. But it was taken cheerfully up, and the two teams, supported by their friends, now confronted each other in deadly earnest. They fought hand to hand, confining themselves to the use of fists and feet, and many were badly injured on both sides. Friendly mediation, however, in course of time prevailed, ruffled feelings were soothed, and they departed in peace to their respective homes.

Some miles back from the coast there is a battlemented rock—in one aspect of it not unlike the Castle Rock of Edinburgh—very high, and with precipitous sides, quite inaccessible indeed except in one part, where there was a narrow ascent to the top on which a native village, Natewa Matua, was perched, surrounded by a high thick stone wall, which was built on the very edge of the precipice, and provided with loopholes for the purpose of galling an invading foe. In front of each house was a deep, dry well, lined with stones, which was used for storing provisions in the event of a siege. It was regarded in old days as absolutely impregnable and out of reach of every foe.

CHAPTER XXX.

"The Garden of Fiji."

TAVIUNI, which has been called the Garden of Fiji, from the exceeding beauty and richness of its vegetation, is an island lying off Vanua Levu, in a south-easterly direction, and separated from it by the Somo Somo strait. It is about twenty-five miles in length, with a coastline of about sixty miles, and consists of a densely wooded mountain rising gradually from the seaboard up to a central ridge which is about 2000 feet high. There is a lake at the top of the mountain occupying, it is supposed, the crater of an extinct volcano. It was believed for a long time to be bottomless until Dr. Seeman, by personal observation and experiment, ascertained that its depth did not in any part exceed sixteen feet. There are two outlets from the lake through which the water finds its way into the sea. The island has no girdling reef of coral to protect it from stormy seas, which, during the prevalence of heavy weather, beat upon its shores; but usually there is

no practical difficulty in carrying out the shipping appointments with the island, and fulfilling them with punctuality.

I enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. James McConnell, of Ardmore, merchant and planter at Vuna, who, along with Sir John Thurston, had represented Taviuni in the old Parliament of Thakombau, and who has all along devoted himself with energy and ardour to public affairs ; but, like some other intelligent and influential planters in the group, he has always maintained an attitude of keen antagonism to the policy which the Government has steadily pursued.

The number of Fijians on the island is small. It no doubt maintained a teeming population at an earlier period. Traces of that were to be found everywhere inland in the decayed fortifications and dismantled buildings which abounded on every side. This decimation of the native tribes was due partly to wars, the wasting effects of which were still seen in the fewness of the cocoanut groves in the island. For, it is said, the Tongans ravaged the country and destroyed many of the trees in order to add poverty and want to all the nameless miseries of war. The measles then attacked the natives and carried off a large number here as well as in other parts of the group. The Europeans are settled on plantations mainly around the coast.

The sail to Somo Somo, where the ruling chief resides, presents to view an ever changing scene of beauty. A luxuriant growth of vegetation covers the whole eastern slope of the island, excepting where it has been cleared away for plantation purposes. The trees are festooned with vines, and the dense undergrowth in places is, in season, gay with blossom. And very wonderful are the forms which sometimes meet the eye ; the Baka, the Pandanus, and the Ivi-tree arrest attention by their strangely fantastic shapes. Women carrying hand-nets may be seen walking in Indian file to their favourite fishing grounds ; and a shout from one of our native crew occasionally directs attention to the movements of the turtle diving into the security of deep water when startled by the plash of the oars.

There lay at Wairiki, under cover of a spacious shed, a war canoe of large dimensions, belonging to Tui Thakau. Many years of labour had been spent in its construction, and with such primitive tools as the workmen possessed, it seems a marvel that they could accomplish such a result. It was all bound together by sinnet, and coils of cable lay around, all formed of multiplied strands of the same material. On the beach there was a great heap of "masi," or native cloth, enough perhaps to clothe a tribe, going to utter waste and ruin. Tui Thakau had ordered it to be made in anticipation of a visit from Thakombau. But when the great

Chief came, he found it inconvenient to take that royal gift away ; and, as it was "tabu'd" to every one else, it lay there through summer and winter, parched and drenched with heat and rain.

Queen Eleanor, as she was called, the chief wife of Tui Thakau, was a very handsome woman of dignified carriage, and possessed of great charm and courtesy of manner. She received me with cordiality and conversed with me through an interpreter —one of the planters who accompanied me. We were all seated on mats in a lofty building, the rank of its owner being indicated by the cowrie shells that adorned it. Round about us women were seated or lying on fine mats, smoking silukas and talking together in low tones. In another part of the building men were engaged in the manufacture of "Kava," which was presently served to each of us in a cocoanut bowl, the bearer falling into a respectful posture when he presented it to us. Tui Thakau himself was ill. He was one of the few remaining chiefs who had clung, in his domestic life and habits, largely to the old order, which was passing rapidly away. He died at Somo Somo in March, 1879 ; and Sir John Thurston, who had taken a special interest in Ratu Lala, his eldest son, used successfully all his influence to have him appointed chief in his father's place.

A favourite game in the islands is Tinga, which is played on the wide, open space that is usually

found outside the larger villages. A piece of wood resembling a spear head, smoothed and polished, is fitted with a light reed shaft and thrown in such a manner that it skims over the ground, touching it lightly now and again as it speeds on its course. The tinga-stick that flies farthest and straightest wins. The game excites a good deal of interest, and affords scope for the exhibition of strength and skill.

But the one great outstanding amusement of the Fijians, of which they never seem to tire, which they never weary of exhibiting to the stranger, which, in olden days at least, was accounted the central glory of birthday pageantries, is the "Meke Meke," or native dance. It is sometimes accompanied with a sort of dramatic representation and chant, which are at times of a martial character, and pass into plaintive and precatory phases. The whole performance, with its swarthy actors and tropical surroundings, awakens a sort of weird interest which at first impresses the spectator. Two men stand face to face and begin the chant, beating time with pieces of bamboo. Men and women move around the central figures and join now and again in chorus, keeping time admirably by clapping the hands and stamping the feet with an energy which showed that they put heart into the play—all accompanied with certain actions having a bearing apparently on the burden of the

chant. At one time they seem to be shooting imaginary arrows at an imaginary foe; again, they throw themselves into the attitude of suppliants lifting clasped hands to the heavens; then, changing character, they all limp, affecting the infirmity of a lame man. It was at first all strangely interesting, but the monotony and endless repetitions of certain words and actions make it tiresome after a while.

My friends and I arrived late one night at Wairiki and, in course of conversation with the town chief, were asked whether we would not like to see the Meke? "It is too late," I said, "the people are all in bed." "That doesn't matter," the chief replied through an interpreter, "We'll soon rouse them up, and they can sleep all day to-morrow." Through the village the word sped. Dusky forms swarmed out of every hut, and full fifty men and maidens in an incredibly short space of time were in the full swing of their favourite pastime. Blazing torches held aloft by boys flung the shadows of the forest back, and shed a lurid light upon the scene.

That was followed by a war dance performed by twenty Tanna men brought from one of the neighbouring plantations. A bright little boy, a younger son of Tui Thakau, full of vivacity, his eyes sparkling with keen excitement, illuminated the

scene with a blazing light, which he renewed from time to time. The Tanna men threw a wild energy into their performance; their snatches of song sometimes broke into bewildering shrieks while they fiercely brandished gleaming weapons in the air. It seemed at times as if they were working themselves into a white heat of passion and as if their excitement would carry them beyond control. It was too grotesquely wild and barbaric an exhibition to interest us. But the Tokelau women natives of the Gilbert Islands, were evidently not of our mind. Robed in long white garments and smoking their fragrant silukas, they moved about with languid talk, but in manifestly keen enjoyment of the scene.

The banana leaf is applied to various useful purposes by the Fijian. It becomes an excellent waterproof by exposure to heat, and the natives use it, thus prepared, to protect their heads from wet. It is used also to wrap round "mandrai," (a kind of native bread), and other things in the preparation of which oil is used.

The Kula, a small bird found in the island, was a much prized possession in the earlier days. I was fortunate enough to secure a good specimen. Its brilliant plumage of scarlet, purple and green was greatly valued by the Tongans. The Samoans

also prized the bird highly, and used its feathers in the ornamentation of their finer mats.

Round the coast, proceeding from Mr. Hunter's sugar estate at Salai Levu, there is a curious imprint of red human hands—right and left hands and of different sizes—on the face of a hard basaltic rock at a considerable height above a cave. The red goes deep into the rock apparently, for when scraped off, though it shows a grey colour, yet on the application of moisture the red comes out clearly again. According to native tradition, those imprints are the abiding memorials of chiefs whose hands were steeped in human blood and who, in passing to the judgment of Dengei, left their marks behind them as witnesses of their evil doings. In all probability they had their origin, like the rock pictures of the Australian aboriginal, or of the New Zealand Maori, in a sporadic effort to give rude expression to an incipient taste for art.

One day, at Vuna, I passed through acres of cotton, the plants being gay with opening capsules out of which snowy fibre peeped ; and I saw sugar plantations—the canes eight or nine feet high, many of them trampled down in hopeless waste—all the cotton and all the sugar lost, because it did not pay to pick the cotton and there was no machinery to crush the cane. Between the two plantations there was a broad pathway bordered

with bananas, which were laden with bunches of fruit. Bad times had for a while intimidated enterprise and unnerved the hand of industry, and progress was in some measure barred by lack of capital. But mills have now been erected and new enterprise and energy applied to the development of the wonderful resources of this fertile island—sugar, yams, copra, fibre and cotton are cultivated and put into market at fairly remunerative prices; fat cattle are shipped to Levuka and Suva, and efforts are being continually made to enlarge the variety of products, and to extend the area of agricultural operations.

There are heavy rains in Taviuni. A planter who lived some two miles back from the coast, told me he had found by careful observation that the rainfall for the previous year had been 212 inches, of which 8 inches fell in one day. A friend of his on Vanua Levu found the rainfall there during the same period had been 126 inches. In Taviuni the soil, which seemed to be always thirsty, quickly absorbed the moisture. The creek beds were often dry, laying bare black scoriaceous rock. There is a deep underground river and subterranean water courses, by which the sea at high tide communicates with inland caves.

During eight months of the year—from April to November—there is a prevalence of fresh trade-

winds, which greatly temper the tropical heat; and from all I could see and learn, the climate is a remarkably healthy one for Europeans of ordinarily active and temperate habits.

The coast towns and settlements are easily accessible by sea; but a good road has been made round the island. It was commenced at Vuna under the superintendence of the Royal Engineers, and subsequently extended by prison labourers, who have rendered good service to the colony as makers and menders of roads.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Curious Products of Coral Reefs.

MANY of the islands are contributories, to some extent, to swell the steadily growing volume of exports from the colony. Cotton (the cultivation of which has received a fillip from shortage of production in other lands), copra, maize, cocoa-nut fibre, cattle and sheep, all find a ready market, and are in fair demand at one or other of the Ports of Fiji. The total area of lands in the colony under cultivation in 1902, was 58,488 acres, being an increase of nearly 10,000 acres in three years—cocoanuts, sugar cane, rice, and tea being the main products of the increased acreage.

Koro is an island of considerable size, distant from Ovalau about 40 miles, and in the old heathen mythology of Fiji was said to have a curious distinction. Every object in the material world, according to the native conception of things, had its spiritual counterpart, or essence, which represented it in a continuity of existence in the

great ghostly realm that lies beyond the confines of this present life. Pigs, therefore, according to their scheme, had souls, and Koro was the pigs' Elysium. The spirits of all the slaughtered swine in the group were believed to assemble and spend a happy immortality there.

But the island has a more interesting association than that. The Fijians speak of a flood which some accounts record as partial, while others represent it to have been a universal deluge. The highest point of the island is associated with that catastrophe. Its name is Na gingi tangithi Koro, which conveys the idea of a little bird sitting there and lamenting the drowning of the island. In this bird the lotu'd natives thought they recognized Noah's dove on its second flight from the ark. "I have heard a native," Calvert records, "after listening to the narrative of the incident as given by Moses, chant :—'Na gingi sa tangithi Koro ni gali,' that is, the gingi laments over Koro because it is lost."

There are other traditions that seem to point concurrently in the same direction. There is no doubt that the islands represent the high lands or mountain tops of a great submerged continent ; and it is quite possible that there is truth in the statement which has been made, that "the race once occupied a vast area extending from Madagas-

car all through the coasts of the Indian Ocean to the most eastern part of the Pacific, but were separated by geological convulsions and the pressure of pre-historic events."

Wakaya is a small island about twelve miles distant from Ovalau. There is not much cultivation on it beyond that of cocoanut trees which grow near the shore. In the old days when cotton was the staple article of export, a large area was brought under careful cultivation, but when competition in other countries sent prices down with a run, here, as well as everywhere else in the group, the crops ran to waste, and planters cast about them for some more profitable use to which to put their land. As this island is rich in well-grassed sheltered valleys, it has been used largely for grazing purposes. There are some valuable trees here, including the dilo ("Calophyllum Inophyllum"), which is found on many of the islands in Fiji. Its grain is more variegated than that of mahogany, while the wood is harder, and when better known it will probably be in large request for the manufacture of ornamental articles for domestic use.

From the circling reef there come in season the Balolos, whose appearance is something of a mystery in these tropical seas. The balolo appears annually, at first in small quantities in October,

which is therefore known as "Vula i balolo lailai," that is, the little balolo month ; but they appear in vast numbers towards the end of November, which is therefore called "Vula i balolo levu," or the great balolo month. The time of their coming was looked for with great interest, and was predicted, it was said, with unerring certainty from the phase of the moon. They belong to the family of the Annelides, and are of various colours —red, green, and brown—which fade out when they are removed from the water. They rise from the reef some hours before dawn, when the whole surface of the sea to the depth of several inches seems to be covered with a squirming, weltering mass of life. Long before break of day the natives and some Europeans went out in canoes and boats to gather them for food ; but when the sun's glowing heat touched the water every trace of them disappeared. Those that were captured were wrapped in bread-fruit leaves and cooked in ovens dug in the beach. In old times the natives used to look for heavy rains to quench the oven fires. Should no rain fall, a bad yam season, they believed, would surely follow.

I was fortunate enough to secure some carefully preserved specimens of balolos, through the kindness of Mr. Paul Hoerder, of Levuka ; and as there were none in the Dunedin Museum, they were presented to that institution.

The "Chieftain's Leap," on this island, is a remarkable shelf of rocks of considerable height, whence a chief, who was brought to bay and unable to resist his enemies who pressed hard upon him, precipitated himself and met his death rather than fall into their hands—an example which was followed by many of his tribe.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Bengga and its Fire-Walkers.

BENGGA, a little island lying off Suva, is in mystery, what Bau in the old days was in politics, a centre of supreme interest in the group. It was the scene of many a quaint legend of the gods and of daring exploits of heroic chiefs. One of the traditions of this island, which has been rescued from oblivion, has all the semblance of a fairy tale. Story-telling is a favourite amusement of the Fijians, the qualifications of the relator being estimated by the extravagance of his exaggerations.

The men of Navakaisese were lying on their mats one day indulging in this pastime, each trying to surpass the other in the wild extravagance of the story he told. All eyes were turned towards one who cried, "Yes, I'll tell you something; what will my nambu (reward) be?" Various promises were given, and the chief, Tingalita said, "My nambu shall be an eel." Some days previously he had seen a large eel in a cave at

Namoliwai ; and he returned to capture it in order to pay the promised nambu.

As he explored with his hands the dark interior of the cave, groping about in the water and mud, he at last came upon a hand, then the head of a human form, and he dragged it out into the light for closer inspection. The captive crouched in humble posture and begged to be released, offering in exchange for his liberty to become to Tingalita his "god of war." "No," the chief replied, "my fame as a fighter is assured," "I will be your good genius in the Tinga game," the captive said. But Tingalita only shook his head. "I will be your god of riches and help you in many ways." "Not good enough," was the reply. "Tingalita ! when your tribesmen of Sawau have a masawe baking, you and I can be baked in the oven and dug out alive in four days' time." That tempting offer was more than Tingalita could resist, so he closed with it and gave the captive his liberty.

Once every year the Masawe, a dracaena that grows in abundance on the grassy hill-sides of the island, ripens and yields the sugar, of which its fibrous roots are full. To render it fit for use, the roots must be baked among hot stones for four days.

In course of time the pit-oven was prepared, and when the stones were at a glowing heat the

captive of the cave sprang in and seated himself upon them. "Come on, Tingalita, my chief," he cried, "and join me here." But the other hesitated. At last, after some encouragement, he stepped in, and found, to his surprise, that the stones felt cool to his feet. He thought, wonderful as it was, that it would be unnecessary to spend four days there, and that an occasional renewal of the feat would be more to his mind. He expressed himself to that effect, and his strangely acquired friend bestowed on him the power, for himself and all his descendants, to walk in fire unharmed—to tread the masawe oven unscorched by heat.

Back into the mists of that old legend the people trace the ceremony of fire-walking, which has excited a good deal of wonder and inquiry of late, and completely baffled men of scientific habit of mind. When, in the year 1886, the Sawau people gave a demonstration of the faculty which, they allege, has come down to them from their ancestor, Tingalita, they invited many spectators, including the Governor's Commissioner from Suva, to be present at Bengga to witness the performance, which had originally, I believe, a religious significance.

A pit was dug, known as a "lovo," firewood was placed in this, and round water-worn stones upon the wood. The cavity thus occupied was from

twelve to eighteen feet long, and when the timber was fired a great heat sprang up, so that the people could approach the pit only by shading themselves with large "via" leaves. When the heat had reached a high temperature, the brands were removed and only the red-hot stones remained, from which a firece heat radiated. Jonathan, a native stipendiary magistrate, led the way, the report says, into the fiery pit, bare legged and bare footed, with two or three of his tribesmen following him. They passed, according to the testimony of one of the spectators, with a leisurely movement over the heated pavement ; and while they paused near the centre of the oven a company of Sawau men numbering twenty, entered and walked its whole length. Then quantities of green hibiscus leaves were thrown in, which caused dense clouds of vapour to rise and hide the performers out of sight. When the fire-walkers ascended from the pit the most careful investigation could detect no smell of singeing of the hair, and no sign of either blister on the skin or of burning on the feet.

Some time ago two well-known medical men—Messrs. Hocken and Colquhoun, of Dunedin—visited Bengga and witnessed the ceremony, which Dr. Hocken, soon after his return, described at a meeting of the Otago Institute. "These people," he said, "almost nude and with bare feet, walk quickly and unharmed across and among the stones made

white hot, forming the pavement of the cooking oven. An attempt was made to register the heat, but when the thermometer had been placed for a few seconds about four or five feet above the stones, it had to be withdrawn, as the solder of the tin covering began to melt. The thermometer then registered 282 degrees ; and Dr. Hocken estimated that the range was over 400 degrees. The fire-walkers, seven or eight in number, then approached, and in single file walked leisurely across and around the oven. The leader was a second or two under half a minute on the stones. Then heaps of the soft and succulent leaves of the hibiscus were thrown into the oven causing clouds of steam, and upon the leaves and within the steam the natives sat or stood. The men were carefully examined by the two doctors both before and after the ceremony. The fire had not affected the simple articles of dress they wore. The soles of their feet were not thick or leathery. The men showed no symptoms of distress and their pulse was unaffected. The soles of the feet were not in the least blistered. Simple tests made failed to show that there had been any special preparation. Both doctors, while denying anything miraculous about the experiment, expressed themselves unable to give any scientific explanation of the matter." Such is the condensed report of a late exhibition of that wonderful performance, of which no satisfactory solution, so far as I know, has yet been discovered.

Sir William Macgregor, writing to me on this subject, says, ". . . I have not seen the fire-walking in Fiji. The Hon. Dr. Corney has, I believe, witnessed it, and could probably supply information. I presume it is explicable on the well-known principle of the protection afforded to the skin, for a short time, against great heat, by a thin layer of moisture. . . ."

The Hon. Dr. Corney kindly supplied me with the following interesting information on the subject :—"Three times in the course of the last eleven years I have witnessed the ceremony of "Vilavila i Revo" performed from time to time at the island of Mbeng'ga, in this Colony, for the purpose of baking the masawe root.

"My view of the innocuousness of the ordeal, as regards the feet and bodies of the performers, is not a very satisfactory one—judged in the sense of the solution of an enigma ; but such as it is, you are welcome to it.

"I have walked about a good deal in the neighbourhood of the village (Rukua) where this function is gone through, and have noticed the young boys skipping from rock to rock on the beach from their earliest youth. These rocks are composed of very sharp black lava, the beach faces the westward, and they become so hot on fine after-

noons that the hand (of an ordinary white man) cannot be borne in contact with them for many seconds. The children are thus reared in a school where hardness and callousness of the soles of the feet are engendered.

"The stones of the 'oven' heated for the ceremony are, of course, much hotter than this; and something more than mere apprenticeship to a sun-stricken beach of lava is requisite to enable the men and youths who walk round the furnace to stand the heat. Dr. Hocken's account of the heat is not exaggerated; it is a fair and calm statement of the conditions. It must, however, be borne in mind that the natives do not remain in contact with the heated stones for more than a very few seconds—the first to enter walking once round on the periphery of them, and the last to enter taking only one or two steps altogether before the first completes the circuit.

"The instant the circuit is completed by the leading man, or couple, if hand in hand, the by-standers pitch their armfuls of masawe leaves—with which they are all ready provided—into the pit, and the fire-walking party immediately trample them under foot, lining the pit over the hot stones completely with a thick layer of the leaves in a very brief time, and thus superposing a non-conducting material between themselves and the

heat. The heat is at this stage still great enough to raise columns of steam from the green leaves thrown in. The ultimate purport of these leaves is to line the oven, over the stones, for the reception of the masawe roots—which are the aim and object of the whole procedure—being baked for four days and nights for the extraction of the saccharine principle they contain.

"In my view the remaining factor necessary for enabling the natives to endure the heat—which I have admitted is great—for such time as they are in the pit, is simply bravado—in modern English, bluff. This spirit may be aided perhaps by the inborn and lasting superstitious mind of the Fijian, his belief in the traditions of his ancestors, and his love of the marvellous, and of deception. When these qualities are considered side by side with the aspect of the callous and horny sole of the average native accustomed to rocky ground from his infancy, I have concluded that the whole function is capable of explanation in this light.

"I have seen one of the performers spring out of the 'oven' before he had completed his half round, the heat being more than he could face. I captured him on the brink, and examined his feet, which I found intact. If the heat can be so great as to compel one Fijian to make himself an object of shame and ridicule, without singeing his soles,

it seems rational to suppose that another Fijian can save his soles, even though he is able to bear the discomfort of the heat.

"The 'Revo,'—which is the local dialectic term for the more classical word 'Lovo'—meaning oven or pit, in which it is customary, as in other parts of Polynesia, to bake food by the agency of heated stones (in the cases where I was present at the 'Vilavila i Revo'), measured thirty feet from brim to brim, and was eight feet in depth altogether. Only the central portion was occupied by the hot stones as they lay piled on the fire ; but after the firewood was all consumed a lengthy and arduous operation of spreading the red-hot stones from the centre towards the periphery was gone through, by means of poles and lianas, by which of course their cooling was materially facilitated. It is on this marginal row or layer of stones that the party principally step in their brief and hurried transit round the pit ; and, as I have already mentioned, the precarious position is abruptly changed into one of security by the leaves being cast in and trodden under foot all over the oven the instant the leading man reaches the end of his first round simultaneously with the entry of the last man into the place of danger. . . . ."

The Hon. B. G. Corney, I.S.O., M.L.C., whose scientific knowledge, mental acumen, and keen

faculty of sagacious observation eminently qualify him to form an accurate judgment on the performance has, in the above lucid description and explanation of it, stripped from it much of the weirdness and mystery that had gathered round it, and made it one of the most puzzling marvels of the South Pacific.

The Hon. W. L. Allardyce, C.M.G., who, in 1904, was appointed Governor of the Falkland Islands, delivered a lecture on "The Fijians and their Fire-walking," at the Colonial Institute, London. Mr. Allardyce, who, during twenty-five years had held every office in Fiji from junior clerk to Acting-Governor, spoke from an intimate knowledge of his subject, but even he was forced to acknowledge that the secret of fire-walking at Bengga was one that baffled him. He was inclined to think that the great faith of the fire-walkers in this "gift," and the callousness of their feet, caused by walking all their lives over coral strands heated by a blazing sun, were two important factors in the mystery.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Sombre Revelations of the Census.

IT is now admitted beyond controversy that a steady decrease is going on year after year in the native population of Fiji. The fact has excited a good deal of comment, and provoked earnest discussion in the columns of the press. The opponents of the Native Taxation Scheme have persistently represented it to be the natural outcome of the alleged vicious policy which the Colonial Government has pursued. But the late Dr. Lorimer Fison, whose competency to form a sound judgment on this subject perhaps none will question, affirmed that the decrease in the native population is no greater now than it was before the Cession. "There were no extraordinary causes of mortality," he said, "and yet my weekly returns showed the deaths to be almost invariably in excess of the births. They were decreasing before the group was annexed." There, as in Australia, New Zealand, and other lands populated by dark and indigenous tribes, it seems to be established with all the rigor

and fixedness of a natural law, whose operation neither political wisdom nor humane solicitude can check, that the weaker and inferior races should silently vanish before the more robust and vigorous whites. In the New Hebrides' Group we have the rapid decadence of a dark race more impressively forced on our notice, perhaps, than anywhere else. One island which, some years ago, had a population of 5,000, can muster now not more than 300 ; and another, which formerly maintained a considerable tribe, at latest accounts had only three survivors, of whom two died, leaving one solitary inhabitant, who fled in his canoe to a neighbouring island in eager quest of companions. And there was no Taxation Scheme in operation there to bring about such a melancholy result as that.

The census of 1891, taken in Fiji, showed a decrease in the native population, during the previous ten years, of 8,948. The total native population that year being short of 100,000. Sir John Thurston was greatly distressed by the sombre revelations of that census, and cast about for possible causes of the calamity. He drew up a circular dated 30th December, 1891, which he caused to be issued from the Colonial Secretary's office, inviting the Colonists of every class and shade of opinion whom he thought able, from their experience and knowledge of the native character and conditions to throw light on the subject, to assist

him with their observations and suggestions of practical remedies to meet the case. He believed that the rate of mortality among the natives (the effect of epidemics excluded), is less now than it was thirty or fifty years ago, when polygamy, murder, and war were common enough in the land. The great desideratum, in his opinion, was improvement of the moral rather than the physical condition, which would ensure on the part of mothers a more careful nursing of their children, and on the part of husbands, a more tender concern for their wives and families. The maternal instinct of the average Fijian woman of the present day, he maintained, is practically an absent quantity, and the main problem is to find some effective method of developing that.

A Royal Commission was appointed to deal with the subject, and the report of that Commission is one of the most valuable Blue Books ever published, perhaps, embodying a vast amount of information and many sagacious recommendations, which have led to social and sanitary reforms that may open a new and brighter future to the native race.

Before the measles appeared in 1875, at least two epidemics introduced, it was confidently asserted, by European vessels, ravaged the islands and left the enfeebled remnant of the people to wail

over heaps of dead. The earlier of these two epidemics, known to tradition as Lila Balavu, or "the wasting sickness," made a profound impression, which took pathetic utterance in a sorrowful "meke" that still survives; the other, known as Thokandra, a malignant form of dysentery, was especially disastrous in its effects. Many towns were depopulated by it, and by the famine that succeeded it, in consequence of the inability of the people to provide their usual supplies of food. In the Tonga district of Rewa, it is said, whole tribes perished, leaving wide tracts of country without an inhabitant. "We believe," the Commission reported, "that all the epidemic diseases were unknown to the Fijians before their contact with foreigners, and that the physical constitution of the race has been undermined by the persistent attacks of these epidemics, which found a virgin soil for their propagation free from circumstances unfavourable to their development."

But an intelligent observer—Dr. Brown, of the Wesleyan Mission, thinks, that among the many reasons given for the great mortality in the native population, the real one has been missed. If contact with white men and the acquirement of new diseases had been the cause, it would naturally be expected, he says, that the coastal tribes in immediate contact with the whites would be the

chief sufferers ; but it is not so. He crossed the large island, visited the mountain tribes living on high and healthy uplands, and where white influence is rarer, yet found the mortality there, perhaps, a little greater than on the coast. The sanitary conditions of life might certainly be improved, but Dr. Brown's view, an interesting one to ethnologists, is, that the Fijian race had become effete long before a white man set foot in the tropical paradise, and that its condition in this respect is growing slowly and steadily worse. In the natural course of things it looks as though Fijians are a doomed race, and the introduction of new blood is the only thing to save them. There is no apparent falling off in the vitality of the natives. Physically they look just as fine and picturesque a race as the other islanders of the Pacific, and the birth rate is fairly high, but the death rate with infants is abnormal.

No doubt, as Sir John Thurston believed, the great mortality here indicated might be very materially reduced by a humane and resolute effort to improve the condition of nursing mothers, who are compelled to carry their children with them when they go out to field or bush to their daily tasks—to weed the yams, or gather fuel, or when they wade out on coral reefs to fish. They cannot leave them at home, for even if there were someone to look after them, there is no adequate substitute

usually available for the provision that nature makes for the sustenance of the child. In the Gilbert Group there is a butter made from the ripe fruit of the pandanus tree, which takes the place of the mother's milk, but that particular species of the pandanus does not grow in Fiji. And although goats can be bought for a few shillings and cows for three or four pounds a head, yet the natives cannot be trusted to attend to cattle, and have no idea of the absolute need for keeping dairy dishes clean. The result is, when the natural fountain of supply in the mother diminishes or dries up from any cause, the child who is dependent upon that pines away and dies from its inability to digest chewed yam or other vegetable pulps that may be supplied to it.

The development of a stronger maternal affection in the native mothers of Fiji, and improved methods of treating their children, will be a product of a deepened moral sense, of the wide diffusion of information of supreme importance to the physical well-being of the race, and the growth of a chivalrous feeling in their hearts, leading the men to a more thoughtful and tender concern for the women, and to a more equitable distribution of the needful daily tasks—not that the women may have more leisure, for that might be disastrous to them, but that they might have duties allotted to them which would be more suitable than field

work to their sex, and tend to the formation of habits of cleanliness and to the cultivation of tastes that would work a transformation in the domestic life of the people.

"The most favourable admixture with the Fijians," the Commission appointed to inquire into the decrease of the native population says in its report, "judged by the progeny, appears to be found in the negro or dark African races; and, if it were practicable, we would advocate the introduction of Zulus or Kaffirs—not only on account of the value of their commixture with the Fijians—but also, because living as they do on milk and leguminous and graminaceous foods, and understanding the care of cattle, they would teach the Fijians by example to reform their dietary. It has been suggested to us that from the population of Barbados some assistance might be obtained. That island, of which the area is only 166 square miles (the area of the island of Taviuni is 217 square miles), contains a population of about 185,000, or about 175 people to every hundred acres of land. In Fiji there are only about two natives to every hundred acres of native land. The natives of Barbados (male and female) are celebrated for their proficiency as agricultural labourers in the cane fields of Jamaica and Demerara, whither they periodically emigrate for short seasons. The density of the population

of the island has necessitated the formation of a Board of Emigration for the purpose of arranging for the disposal to the best advantage of the surplus population. The Barbadian would be a most acceptable immigrant to Fiji, either as a plantation labourer or as an adjunct to the native population. In this colony he could find both work and land, while the climate does not differ materially from that of his native island. The inherent vitality of his race might fairly be expected to rehabilitate the low energy of the Fijians, if the two races could be brought into contact. There is no antipathy on the part of the Fijian towards men of African race as there is towards East Indians and Line Islanders. Africans would, in fact, be favourably received."

I hope to be able to show later on, that administrative action taken, involving a slight modification of the Native Scheme, in the direction of developing the individual energies and stimulating the industrial habits of the natives, promises to be fruitful to them of the very best results.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Native Revolt at Mathuata.

THE tone of hopefulness for the future of the Colony which rang in the public welcome that Sir John Thurston received on entering on the Administration of his Government, was abundantly justified by events. A steady flow of prosperity set in which strengthened confidence, liberated capital, and opened up new channels for trade. The happy results of the improved condition of things were apparent enough in every district where a spirit of contentment reigned, and the people with renewed energy applied themselves to their industrial pursuits. It was no mean factor in the general satisfaction which at this time prevailed, as it was an eminently gratifying thing to the Colonial Office, that in less than two years since the assumption of office by Sir John Thurston the floating debt of the Colony had been reduced by £20,000.

The growing financial soundness of Fiji, and the steady progress of its trade operations were

indicated by a gratifying announcement which His Excellency made to the Civil Servants, including the Chief Justice, Attorney-General, and other Members of the Executive, assembled by invitation on 16th September, 1891, in the drawing-room of Government House. Nearly four years previously they had met in the same place to hear Sir Charles Mitchell addressing them dolourously enough on the "grave exigencies of the moment which demanded rigorous retrenchment on every side." The tax then imposed had been for some time abolished, and now Sir John Thurston was able to redeem the promise given by his predecessor, that all deductions, when the circumstances of the Colony should be sufficiently prosperous to warrant it, would be fully repaid.

In June, 1892, the Governor, accompanied by his wife and family, visited the remoter districts of Tholo East, where native disturbances had caused anxiety the previous year. Some of the more distant mountain tribes on whom the ancient superstitions had not completely lost their hold, had given a ready ear to political agitators—descendants of old heathen priests who had adopted the tenets of the men of Navosavu who, as far back as 1875, had stirred up trouble by pretending to make spirits appear at the sources of the Wainimala, and had kept up this imposition, breeding disloyalty and insurrection among the

people, until Sir John Thurston removed them by force. His visit now was partly in connection with that trouble, and partly to formally open roads that had been made in order to hold under better control the tribes which inhabited fastnesses, hitherto largely out of easy reach of the strong hand of the law. The Governor now addressed about 2,000 natives who assembled to meet him, and urgently counselled them to cultivate their lands, to live quietly and peaceably with their neighbours, and to be distrustful of those who would lead them into rebellion, which the Government must subdue with a firm hand.

Early in the following year Sir John left Fiji for the Australian Colonies on health furlough; and a fortnight after his return to Suva he had to deal with natives in revolt at Mathuata, in the island of Vanua Levu. On 11th June he received an urgent letter from the Roko Tui of the district, stating in effect that a portion of the hill tribe of his province had broken into rebellion, and had committed murders and acts of cannibalism which deserved rigorous punishment. The Governor, notwithstanding the infirm state of his health, made immediate arrangements to deal with the revolt. Putting himself at the head of the Constabulary, he set out on a long and arduous journey by sea and land, and crushed the power of the rebellious tribe before they could gather in

force against him. His stroke fell swiftly upon them, and his decisive action had an excellent moral effect on the people. Upwards of a thousand of them assembled at Nanduri when the brief campaign was over, and expressed their loyalty to the Government and regret that the disturbance had taken place. The Governor called on Ratu Eliesa, a native minister, to offer up a short prayer to God, "in which," Sir John Thurston said, "he hoped every man in that great assembly would join, that this would be the last time the history of the Colony might be sullied and its good name tarnished by such evil occurrences."

That Sir John Thurston performed the arduous duties of his high office in no perfunctory or slip-shod manner is clearly attested by all who knew him ; and when, in August, 1894, he stated to his Council "that he could say without hesitation that to every matter which he had to decide he had brought the most solicitous consideration, and come to a conclusion conscientiously and only after carefully weighing it in all its aspects."—When he stated that, the Members of his Council could honestly reply, "We are your witnesses." That—and more than that was virtually embodied in an address which they presented to him congratulating him on his re-appointment to his high office for another term. He was always ready to make grateful

recognition of the efficiency of the Civil Service of the Colony, and on public occasions cordially acknowledged the obligations under which he lay to the officers of the State for the earnest and active co-operation and help which they gave him in his efforts to promote the public advantage.

In spite of the multiplying indications that forced themselves upon him that his physical powers were fast decaying, his interest in the prosperity and progress of the Colony continued unabated. He was unceasingly enriching it with new varieties and species of plants and trees of economic value; and, desirous of introducing oysters, he wrote to an old friend of his in Brisbane, who sent him a bag and thirteen boxes of the bivalve. Sir John caused their contents to be suitably placed, and believed that the oyster beds of Fiji would ultimately prove of great value to the Colony.

Early in January, 1895, a disastrous hurricane swept the islands, wrecking many of the plantations and buildings that lay in its path. Full of practical sympathy with Europeans and natives alike who had suffered from its ravages, the Governor, accompanied by his Private Secretary, proceeded to Levuka to see for himself the damage which the old town had sustained. Thence he sailed to Taviuni, where many plantations were

ruined, and which was strewn with the wreckage of vessels that had foundered off the coast. Having visited Bau and other places, he passed on to Rewa where he held a meeting of chiefs to initiate steps to ascertain the actual amount of loss, and to give such relief as the circumstances required. Later on, in spite of physical infirmity and the discomfort which travelling entailed, in company with the Native Commissioner, he left Suva to attend the funeral of Sairusi Dula, Roko of Kandavu, at Tavuki ; and, at the close of that function, he met the chiefs and people in conference, at Buli Tavuki's house. Personal considerations were not allowed to interfere with his faithful performance of public duty.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Defence of the Native Policy.

In March, 1895, Sir John Thurston arranged to leave the Colony on a visit to England in order to recruit his health. His conscientious discharge of all the duties—social and administrative—of his high office had too heavily taxed his flagging energies. His anxiety to improve the financial position of the Colony had led to a closeness of application to work which, in an enervating climate, threatened him with nervous collapse. The results were good, but achieved at too big a cost to himself. He had the satisfaction of knowing that seven years previously the Colony had been £50,000 in debt, but now, through his strenuous efforts, supported by the enterprise and patriotism of the people, there was a credit balance of £5000. On the eve of his departure a large company of representative citizens assembled at a banquet which was given to do him honour; and on that occasion grateful recognition was made of the important and manifold services which he had rendered to the Colony.

The Chief Justice, who presided, said:—"Seven years ago the Treasury was not only empty, but we were many tens of thousands of pounds in debt, and the Civil Service salaries were being taxed with the object of contributing somewhat towards assisting the falling revenue. It was at this juncture that Sir John Thurston was selected to administer the Government of Fiji. The burdens which at one time threatened disaster to the Colony had all been gradually lightened, our floating liabilities had been paid off, the tax on the Civil Service salaries had been refunded, and the balance at the bank transferred from the debit to the credit side of the ledger. He alluded to the Protectorate which had been established over the Ellice and Gilbert Groups, where the Queen's writ now runs from end to end. No military force was employed, an official was sent over and the thing was done.

Sir John Thurston said his best thanks were due to the Civil Service for assistance rendered to him in many ways in promoting the best interests of the country. He contrasted the past with the present, the changes he had seen in thirty years—notable buildings erected, seven large steamers calling monthly at the port. Thirty years ago there were only 492 white inhabitants, and the whole trade was some £50,000. In 1893 the total trade was £632,000; the Revenue for 1894 was

about £80,000, the Expenditure £72,273 approximately, and they had entered the year 1895 with a surplus balance of £5,778 8s. 3d.

His visit to England was a very gratifying one. He was entertained and felicitated on all sides on the splendid success of his administration. He was presented with an address by the Aborigines' Protection Society, congratulating him on his twenty years' service in Fiji and the Pacific, and on the firmness and kindness with which he was properly controlling the Kanaka labour traffic and punishing bold violators of the law. He hoped to be able to interest English capitalists in the resources of Fiji, and strained every nerve to allure to it settlers full of enterprise and grit, but he was greatly hampered by the state of his health which, in June, threatened a complete breakdown.

Virulent attacks were made upon him through the London press, not only challenging the wisdom but aspersing the character of his administration, and alleging that the results were disastrous alike to the planters and to the native race. But in a caustic letter which appeared in the "Times," he dealt exhaustively with all the charges that were brought against him, and swept them contemptuously out of court. "Fiji," he reminded his detractors, "was never annexed as some supposed; it was ceded and ceded for a purpose. The policy

sought not to disturb the customs and institutions of the Fijians so far as they might be harmless and not repugnant to the principles animating a civilized government. But there were some people who from lack of imagination could not, and others who would not, understand the policy by which, to use a native form of expression, the Fijian remained still a 'voice' in his own land."

A clamour was raised that the natives of Fiji "were ground between the upper and nether millstones of the Native Taxation." "One object of the administration," Sir John Thurston said, "and one never lost sight of, is the welfare and contentment of the natives, who, in order to protect themselves against the superior ability and energy of the white man, ceded their islands to the Queen. Now, one of the many methods adopted of promoting that welfare is to teach the natives our modes of agriculture wherever the circumstances will so permit. The natives in the neighbourhood of sugar mills are taught to cultivate cane. They are assisted by an officer of the Government, and learn how to plough, drain, plant, cultivate, and finally cut and deliver the cane to millowners. The land is their own, the crop is their own. They hire tramways and trucks from millowners during the season and do their work properly. The amount of the assessment of such natives may be five, but the value of their crop of cane when delivered may be ten or fifteen. The

accounts are kept by the native local scribes and the European officer before referred to. When the season's crushing is over the millowners pay what they owe the native growers to the proper officer. The amount of the assessment is deducted and the balance forms what is called the refund. Take, for instance, the districts of Ba and Lambosa. These places were formerly two comparatively poor districts; now, they are the two most wealthy. Up till lately these districts never produced anything but a little copra and beche-de-mer. The condition of these people prior to the date of cession was savage and benighted in the extreme. At the end of 1894 these so-called down-trodden and oppressed people offered Sir John Thurston voluntarily, £800 or £1000 towards the establishment of a native provincial hospital. The province of Thakaudrove did the same thing, and other districts are prepared to follow."

The Imperial Government knew too well the wide influence Sir John Thurston wielded in Fiji and the value of his services there, to give attention to the trivial charges that were so often trumped up against him; and the Earl of Selborne, in the House of Lords, expressed, on behalf of the Government, their sense of the great injustice, or worse, of the attacks which had been made upon him. They felt, he said, that he deserved the full support of the Government, who had full con-

fidence in the native policy which he carried out in Fiji. He was gratified, about this time, to receive a letter from R. L. Stevenson, in which the writer expressed "his sentiments of respect for him, and his admiration for his successful government of the Colony."

Sir John Thurston, in spite of poor health, rendered great service to his Colony on the occasion of his visit to England ; and before he left for his seat of government a farewell banquet was tendered to him in London, at which Lord Stanmore presided, and at which glowing testimony was borne to his devotion to the duties of his high office and to the splendid success that had marked his administration in Fiji. On his arrival at Sydney his health was still infirm, but he continued always watchful of public events, and, in March, wrote to the English press, commenting on a cable message referring to a case of flogging natives in Fiji :—"During my absence in England," he wrote, "a public officer on his own authority ordered certain natives to be flogged. The officer no doubt considered that the peculiar circumstances justified his order ; but it was wholly illegal, reprehensible and unprecedented. The Administrator of the Government, after inquiry, removed the officer from the district in which he resided, and transferred him to another part of the Colony upon a reduced salary. The unfortunate, and as I have

said above, unprecedented incident, was of course seized upon by those few people in the Colony, who, for reasons of their own, have persistently attacked the administration of the Government of Fiji from the date of its establishment and who, in spite of every evidence to the contrary, aver that the native population is oppressed and impoverished."

About this time, too, it was currently reported that Dr. Vidal, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Fiji, who was now in England, had been appealing to the British Government through Archbishop Vaughan against the administration of Sir John Thurston at Fiji, more particularly on the ground as alleged, of partiality shown to the Wesleyan Mission. An Ordinance had been passed prohibiting natives of particular districts, especially sons of chiefs, from passing beyond the bounds of their own provinces without the sanction of the local authorities. Some affected to believe that the Ordinance was aimed at the Grand College established by Dr. Vidal; but those who were well-informed knew that it was based on other grounds.

During his stay in Sydney, which was prolonged by continued ill-health, Sir John Thurston received the most cordial and sympathetic messages from all parts of the Colony; and the Acting Administrator sent the Hon. Dr. Corney and the Hon.

James Stewart to Sydney to see him and to advise with him on affairs of State. Accompanied by Roko Tui Thakau, Sir John Thurston visited Prince William of Tonga, at Newington College, and, having attended various functions held in his honour, he made preparations for his return to Fiji. He landed at Suva on 17th June, 1896, suffering from an affection of the throat, resulting from the illness which had prostrated him during his absence in the Homeland. From all classes of the community he received an enthusiastic welcome. Fijians, Indians, and the whole white population vied with each other in the cordiality and warmth of their greeting. During his absence the natives throughout Fiji had held special meetings to pray for his recovery ; and it was deeply affecting to see the manner in which many of them with tears in their eyes kissed his hand, and paid him all marks of loving respect when he landed among them. Amid that great and wonderful demonstration of the affection and confidence of the people over whom he had virtually reigned for so many years, he felt that he had nothing to fear from the unceasing carping of a few irreconcilable foes.

On that occasion he was presented with many addresses from public representative bodies ; and to one of these which spoke of the inflexible resolution, clemency, and conspicuous ability which had always characterized his career as Governor of

Fiji, he replied :—"I note with a keen appreciation your reference to the complex and important problems and difficulties that await solution by the Government among the native races referred to. Problems and difficulties of this nature are too often unrecognized, or if partially recognized, are dealt with in a superficial, antipathetic, or purely selfish spirit. Even in quarters where one would expect a different attitude, a total want of consideration for the difficulties and duties of Government is frequently met with."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Cotton, Cocoa-nut and Banana Culture.

IN the early days of cotton planting in Fiji, that is, before the Cession of the country to the British Crown, attention was almost exclusively directed to the cultivation of the kind known as "Sea Island" cotton. It is of very fine quality, and brought from 4s. to 4s. 6d. in the Home Market. It was used by manufacturers to mix with silk. The "Kidney" variety, which brought only 9d. per lb., was accounted unworthy of attention. But those who seemed to have some acquaintance with the subject affirmed that had the planters cultivated the "Kidney" instead of the "Sea Island" variety, they would probably have done well, their prosperity would not have received the disastrous check which it sustained, as it is more cheaply cultivated, picked, and cleaned than the other, and three times the quantity of the "Kidney" will grow to one of the "Sea Island" on an acre of ground.

Sir John Thurston said :—"A large number of planters started who knew nothing about cotton or anything else, and while gaining experience, lost money. If, instead of going in for sugar and tea, which required special knowledge and large capital, they had adhered to cotton, they would have made money." For he had a strong conviction that Fiji is "capable of producing the finest cotton in the world, whether the 'Sea Island' variety or the less valuable upland cotton."

In the year 1872 a curious disease appeared in the plantations of Taviuni. On opening the young green pods they were found to be stained to such an extent as to depreciate the market value of the product. The prices which have ruled have checked enterprise in this direction, and the trade in this article has gradually tapered off to the vanishing point.

The cocoanut supplies the native with meat and drink, and the tree on which it grows is applied to as many uses, perhaps, as the palm tree in the East. Sennit, which supplies cord for a hand-basket, or cables for a war canoe, is made of the fibre dried by baking, and then combed out and braided with the hand. Copra is the kernel of the nut broken up and dried either in the sun or by steam in a drying house. It is then packed in bags for export, and converted into oil by crushing.

The outer husk of the nut is passed into machines known as "devils," by which it is torn up and the fibre combed out and cleaned; it is then put through a screw press by which it is compressed into bales and so prepared for the market. It comes out of the manufacturers' hands in the form of mats, brushes, and other articles of domestic use. The trees are in full bearing in about six years; each one casts annually from eighty to ninety nuts; so that cocoanut plantations have been always something for the Fijian planter to fall back upon, even in the dullest of times. I knew one who had a small grove from which he gathered upwards of a thousand nuts every fortnight. One of the inter-insular boats called periodically and took away his produce, for which he received 25s. for every thousand nuts delivered. It is hoped that some half-million nuts will be planted annually, and that the export of copra will be thus materially increased.

There, as everywhere else, of course, the planter has troubles to face. If he happen to lie in the path of the hurricane, a broad strip of his plantation may be laid utterly waste; or pests and diseases may come and destroy the fruit of his toil. In 1881 the cocoanut plantations in the Savu Savu district were devastated by a large insect of the "mantis" genus, called by the Fijians "Mimimata." They are of a bright green colour—

exactly resembling in colour the leaf—and sometimes six inches or seven inches in length. They prey upon the leaf until the tree is stripped of every particle of foliage, and in process of time dies. In some places the "mimimata" were dislodged by smoke from fires. One ingenious planter imported two laughing-jackasses from Sydney. On their arrival at the plantation they were confined in a cage, and fed on the insects for a few days. When liberated, they made for the trees and feasted on the "mimimata" till none were left.

The Banana is an important product of the country, and the area under cultivation has been for some time steadily increasing. There are about thirty varieties grown in Fiji. A magnificent bunch of the "Gros Michel" variety, the production of the Rewa district, was exhibited some time ago. It weighed ninety-five pounds, and contained something like two hundred fingers, weighing on an average half-a-pound each. Banana meal is highly esteemed by medical men as constituting one of the most nutritious and delicate foods for invalids and children, and is decidedly superior to arrowroot, owing to its delicate flavour as well as its superior nourishing and strengthening properties.

A discovery was made some years ago which may turn out to be of great importance to the Colony. An experimentalist had hit upon a process

by which a fibre could be got from the banana said to be equal in quality to manila hemp. The difficulty previously existing was to get the fibre separated from the other parts of the fruit. That difficulty had been removed. The banana was put into a chemical preparation in which it remained for some hours, and when taken out the fibre was easily freed from the fruity substance. Some bales of this fibre were sent to manufacturers in the Home-land, and may result in the establishment of a new and profitable industry in Fiji.

The banana is subject to various diseases which have caused a good deal of anxiety to the cultivators. Some years ago the young plants were affected either by some pest or some serious defect in culture, which completely baffled all the available local skill and experience in such matters. After the plants were set and had commenced to grow, the outer leaves turned brown, drooped and died, and the succeeding leaves did the same when they reached from four to six inches in length. The plant continued to grow in this way for several years without much increase in size, instead of reaching the normal growth of from six to twelve feet, and producing fruit.

A case of diseased banana plants was therefore sent to the Department of Agriculture in Sydney, with a request for an investigation into the

cause of the trouble. A report was in due time forwarded to Fiji, stating that there were "four distinct and separate causes of the diseased condition of the plants, namely, Aphides, or plant lice; a fungus causing rot in root and stock; and two different species of nematodes. The remedies proposed were (1) The adoption of a system of rotation—it was recommended that banana plants be not grown on the same land continuously for a long series of years; (2) deep ploughing or subsoiling land; (3) the exercise of great care in settling the suckers—that is, in making new plantations."

Communication was opened also with the Director of the Kew Gardens, London, to whom specimens of diseased bananas were also sent. His report was as follows :—"Better and more liberal cultivation is the only remedy; no trace of nematodes, or insect, or fungoid pest; no evidence whatever of any foreign organism. The disease is the result of exhaustion of soil or stock."

An important discovery was accidentally made, in this connection, by Messrs. Peat Brothers and Moore, of Tuvumila, Vanua Levu. On the flat near the shore, they had a patch of bananas much diseased. The sea swept into it and drenched it for nearly an hour with salt water. All the plants were killed right off, so far as standing stems were

concerned, but vigorous young shoots came up freely from the roots, and were not only free from disease, but bore much larger bunches of fruit than the parent plants had ever done. The planters then cut down other diseased plants, and having stirred the ground round about them, poured from one to four buckets of sea water over each, with the result that the parent stems withered away, but vigorous young shoots came away freely without a sign of disease upon them.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Experimenting Enterprise in Fiji.

AT an early period in the history of the Colony a number of planters turned their attention to coffee growing, which promised well for a time. The quality of this product of Fiji exhibited by the Hon. J. E. Mason, at the Melbourne Exhibition, was pronounced to be of the best, and, it was believed, it would command the highest price in the market. A haunting fear of impending disaster to this interest led the Government, in 1879, to pass an Ordinance prohibiting the importation of plants or seeds from infected countries, except under such conditions as the Government might deem expedient.

But unfortunately, the restrictive legislation had come too late; the evil was already done, having been introduced in a Wardian case of plants imported from Ceylon. The appearance of the coffee-leaf disease—"Hemileia vestatrix"—on an estate in the Rewa district, early in July, 1879,

created a scare among the coffee planters. A special meeting of the Agricultural Society was called, and a commission appointed to visit the infected district and report on the nature and extent of the calamity. At a subsequent special meeting it was resolved :—"That the Government be requested to immediately adopt the most stringent measures for the suppression of the leaf disease in coffee." The Government took over the estate for a year, and destroyed patches of coffee that were affected by the disease. Later on, it made its appearance on a plantation at Navua. Dr. Macgregor, with untiring energy and devotion to duty, adopted effectual means to stamp it out wherever evidences of its existence were found. To meet the extraordinary expenditure of about £2,500 thus entailed in delivering the Colony from the grave risk to which the planting interest was exposed, a tax of two pence an acre on all lands for which Crown grants were issued was imposed for a period of two years. It was expected that after that date no further impost would be required. But in spite of all that energetic action to save the industry from collapse, it was fairly ruined, and coffee has no place to speak of among the exports from Fiji to-day.

In the view of competent judges, Fiji, in respect of both climate and soil, is regarded as being equal, if not superior, to the best tea-land in the

world; and so far back as the year 1881, a company was formed for the purpose of promoting the cultivation of tea. Three years' experience of the capabilities of the islands in producing this article of commerce proved that certain localities in Vanua Levu, Taviuni, and Viti Levu were eminently suitable for tea-growing; and, in 1887, the first parcel of 500 pounds was exported to Auckland from Mr. Mason's Alpha Estate in Taviuni. At the tea sales held in Sydney in that year, the Fiji tea was pronounced to compare favourably with the best qualities produced in India and Ceylon. The yield for 1887 was estimated to amount to 40,000 pounds weight of a good marketable commodity. Sir John Thurston was, however, of opinion that owing to the dearness of labour, it could not be grown at a profit in Fiji where labour costs a shilling a day, while it does not exceed five pence in Ceylon. In spite of that expression of opinion, large tea plantations were formed in Fiji, in which capital was sunk unremuneratively, and with a dwindling trade, sufficiently indicated by the significant fact that the total quantity exported in 1895 was about 9 cwt., of the declared value of about £78. In the year 1902 the quantity exported was considerably less than that.

For some time sugar growing could hardly be called a paying investment. Some of the mills

that were erected proved to be absorbents of capital, which was simply transmuted into experience of a pensive sort. But time and caution, and improved methods of procedure, and general knowledge of conditions of success, brought about a change ; and cane-planting and crushing is now established as one of the leading and most remunerative industries in Fiji. Plantations have been made and mills erected mainly with good results in many parts of the group. In the year 1895 upwards of 23,000 tons of sugar were exported, of the declared value of £208,889, forming nearly two-thirds of the total value of the exports from the colony. In the year 1902 the cane plantations covered an area of 27,279 acres, and sugar of the value of £347,689 was exported mainly to Auckland, Sydney and Vancouver.

Sir John Thurston believed Fiji could produce tobacco quite equal in quality to the best brands grown in foreign countries ; and he made very strenuous endeavours to introduce the cultivation of the particular variety of tobacco grown at Delly, in Sumatra. Analyses made by his direction showed that the soil of Sumatra, where this tobacco is grown, and certain soils in Fiji are almost identical in their chemical composition, and, as the climates of the two countries are similar, there appeared to be every ground to believe that the Delly variety could be profitably

cultivated in Fiji. It always seemed to him to be a strange thing that with our vast tropical possessions, enterprise, energy and resources, we had to go to the Dutch, Spanish and other foreign nations for our tobacco. He inspired some of the planters with his views on this subject, and a company was formed to carry them into effect. A block of 640 acres of very choice land was therefore leased from the Government, and operations were started with good hopes of satisfactory results. But the company did not prosper. The season was against them, and they lost heart, and wound up in October, 1892. That tobacco can be cultivated with success in Fiji was demonstrated beyond a doubt by Mr. Sketchely, who produced a first-class article in his plantation at Lovoni, Ovalau, for which he found a good market, and sold at fairly satisfactory prices.

The Nandronga Company (a Sydney corporation formed for the purpose of experimenting in Sumatra tobacco-growing in Fiji), began operations on the Singatoka River at the Western end of Viti Levu, in January, 1895. The lands selected consist of extensive alluvial flats, and are the richest in the whole group. The first shipment of the first crop of tobacco to the European market was pronounced by experts to be of excellent quality. Its features are its extreme fineness of texture, and its good burning quality. It is used

entirely for the outside leaf or wrapper of cigars ; and one pound is sufficient to cover five hundred cigars. In the year 1902 there were 143 acres under cultivation in the Colony, which produced about 25 tons of tobacco.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Products—Introduced and Indigenous.

RICE is grown successfully in Fiji, and there is no reason, except our apathy and want of enterprise and patriotism, perhaps, why the whole Australian market should not be supplied with that article by the sister Colony. Sir John Thurston, in the early days, along with Mr. Burt, tried rice with a large measure of success. Mr. Burt had excellent returns, and exported to the Colonies seven tons of the produce, which commanded a good place in the market. The cultivation at present is mainly confined to supplying the needs of the large coolie population imported for plantation work.

Peanuts (largely used in the manufacture of salad oil), are profitably cultivated in the Colony. A special impetus was given to the industry by the formation in Auckland, some years ago, of a company for the manufacture of stearine candles and oils of all kinds. Two planters in Viti Levu contracted, in 1882, to supply to the Company twenty-five tons monthly. Peanuts of the value of

about £1,000 were exported mainly to Auckland in 1902.

The cultivation of Ramie and its manipulation into fibre ought to become a remunerative industry in Fiji. It is now more than twenty-five years since Sir John Thurston introduced Ramie into the Colony. It is known also as China Grass, or Rhea fibre ; and now that the mechanical difficulties in connection with the decorticating, degumming and spinning of that article have been overcome, the question of an adequate supply of it for the Home market demands attention. At present it is chiefly used as an admixture with silk and the lustre wools, now so fashionable as dress materials ; it is used also in the manufacture of sail cloth, rope and cordage for yachting purposes, its great strength, lightness and durability making it a most effective substitute for hemp ; also, for paper and gun cotton ; but it will be as a substitute for flax and cotton that the greatest demand will arise.

Sir John Thurston was greatly interested also in the cultivation of the Bombay Aloe ("Agave Vivipara"), which is worth from £12 to £15 per ton. He sent to the press a paper on "The Cultivation of Sisal-hemp in Fiji," referring particularly to its recent introduction into the Bahama Islands. The introduction of this industry into the Colony has much to recommend it to those

who are interested in promoting its welfare. The product when once planted is continuous as a crop, and requires no skilled attention. The plant thrives well, and is little affected by either drought or flood.

Oranges, lemons, limes and citrons are commonly cultivated, and of excellent quality. Among indigenous products the "Moli Kana," locally termed the Shaddock, has a value not generally known. From its rind bitters are made of a superior quality, while the peel as a whole is excellent for candying. The Papau, erroneously called Mummie Apple, is another fruit which makes a good preserve and the best digestive pickles in the world, as all parts of the plant contain an alkaloid (popaine) of great value as a vegetable pepsine, and the most powerful curative agent for hepatic enlargements and kindred diseases. Of the tapioca plants the most promising is the sweet cassava, or manioc, which can be grown very cheaply. Sweet cassava meal, mixed with a little wheaten flour, makes delicious cakes and biscuits, and only requires to be known to be in great demand ; while cassava flour is just as good as any arrowroot. Among the introduced plants which display a healthy vigor, and so prove the climate to be thoroughly suitable for them, are cinnamon, clove, cinchona, india-rubber trees and vanilla.

Sir John Thurston, in an inaugural address which he delivered to the Agricultural and Industrial Association of Fiji, made special reference to the Kola Nut, which he urgently pressed on the notice of the planters; and, in order to encourage its cultivation, he informed them that he had 600 young kola trees for distribution among those who desired to have them. He extolled the nutritive qualities of the nut, and the power of sustained effort which it afforded. "Kola chocolate is so nutritious," he said, "that a workman can, on a single cup taken at breakfast time go on with his work through the day without feeling fatigued. Very little appetite is felt for the mid-day meal, showing that the well-known sustaining properties of the nut are retained in the paste. . . Kola nut is an undoubted stimulant in wasting diseases, and by its bitterness and astringency, acts as a powerful tonic in cases of deep-seated lesions of the digestive organs. Its place in therapeutics is far above that of mate (Paraguay tea), coca ("Erythoxylon coca"), and Paulinia ("Guarana"). Messrs. R. Hudson & Co., of Dunedin, manufacturers of chocolate and cocoa, set to work and utilized the information which Sir John Thurston published, and prepared an "eating chocolate containing equal proportions of kola and cocoa, besides the necessary quantities of sugar and arrowroot, to form a palatable and nutritious food."

The kola nut is obtained from a tree that attains to a height of from thirty to sixty feet. In general aspect it resembles the chestnut. It grows wild along the western coast of Africa from Sierra Leone to Lower Guinea. Among the many valuable properties possessed by the kola nut is that of making foul water healthy, and rendering tainted meat fit for food. This action is probably due to the mucilage which the nuts contain, which acts mechanically in the same manner as the white of an egg so often used for clarifying purposes. But the most remarkable property of the kola nut is that which has been already referred to of enabling persons who use it to undergo prolonged exertion without fatigue. This is probably due to the caffeine which the nuts contain.

When Sir John Thurston was in England, he was asked in connection with the export of oil, whether casks could be made in Fiji? He thereupon put himself in communication with the museum at Kew and ascertained from a report on woods placed there that three species suitable for casks grew abundantly in the Colony; so that the material exists for the establishment of another important industry in Fiji.

The dilo nut is an important product indigenous to the country. The oil extracted from it is used by the natives for polishing their

weapons, and for oiling their bodies when cocoanut oil is not at hand. It is also of great value in native pharmacy; it is said to be a sovereign specific for open wounds and for rheumatic and other pains. The wood of the tree is valued on account of its beautiful grain and hardness. It grows very crooked, full of curves and elbows, and supplies the natives with prows and sterns for their canoes.

The Lauthi, or Candle nut, is also a valuable product of Fiji. The oil extracted from it is used by the natives for lighting the house and for anointing the head. It has also a high commercial value. Sir John Thurston, observing that the utilization of the candle nut was much impeded by the difficulty of shelling, sent to Java for seeds of the "Aleurites Triloba," a tree of the natural order Euphorbiaceae. He received a parcel of seed which he sowed in the Government nurseries. Only one of these germinated, and, in 1893, seeded. The product is a nut with a much thinner shell than that of the indigenous article, and is consequently much more easy to deal with.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Death of Sir John Thurston.

THE Colony had been making good strides forward since the year 1888, when Sir John Thurston assumed the reins of government. Her staple exports had been steadily increasing in volume ; financial surpluses had taken the place of deficits in the public accounts ; and indications were multiplying on all sides of a renewed activity in extending the area of cultivation, not only in order to swell the export of the staples, but also with the view of testing the suitability of the soil and climate for the profitable growth of other products. The total imports for 1888 were set down at £183,222 ; and the total exports for the same period at £376,978 ; making a total trade of £560,200. The volume of trade for the year ending 1897 was fairly satisfactory, in spite of the adverse climatic conditions which prevailed during the previous few years, when portions of the Colony were parched and ravaged by drought and hurricane ; in consequence of which many of the

plantations fell considerably short of their average yield. The totals were, Exports, £431,860 ; Imports, £248,748 ; giving an excess of Exports of £183,112. The surplus of revenue over expenditure in 1897 amounted to £1,260, which, added to the accumulated savings of the Colony for some years preceding, brought the amount up to about £10,000. These figures sufficiently indicated that the Colony was in a sound financial state. Sugar, copra, and green fruit continued to hold their ground as the staple products of Fiji, and were set down for the year 1897 as follows :—

Sugar,	26,991 tons,	value £323,830
Copra,	7,757 tons,	value £70,182
Green Fruit		value £16,514

Sir John Thurston's health gave way soon after his return to the Islands ; and on the 29th January, 1897, he sailed for Sydney, accompanied by Lady Thurston and Dr. Murray, his medical adviser. He was suffering from partial paralysis of the nervous system accentuated in the neighbourhood of the throat, and it was believed that his removal to a more arid climate might contribute to his recovery. The voyage seemed somewhat to revive him, and after a few days' rest in Sydney, he sailed for Melbourne in the s.s. Burrumbeet. But he died on board on 7th February, before reaching the Port. His remains were interred in

the Melbourne General Cemetery on the 11th, with all the solemn pageantry of a State funeral.

He was, I believe, one of the ablest men of his time, fitted by his splendid endowments to adorn a wider sphere than that which he filled, but he was content to spend his days in those sunny isles, whose beauty he never ceased to extol, to use all his powers for the highest development of their natural resources, and to work out to its best practical issues the political problem of welding into a close national unity the two races, whose social, intellectual and historical standing were so dissimilar and wide apart. There is no doubt he shortened his life by his closeness of application to unceasing labours. To his administrative duties he gave himself with an unswerving devotion that extorted praise even from his political opponents. No work passed through his hands that was done in an easy, formal, indifferent manner—as a matter of mere official duty and routine. Measures affecting the public interest received his fullest and most assiduous attention. He put the same indomitable energy into every movement to which he committed himself, even into what might be regarded as the minor social functions of his position—into his nurseries of foreign plants—into his correspondence with scientific societies—into his researches into prehistoric antiquities that might shed light on inter-

racial relations and combinations—into everything that awakened his deeper interest, or appealed to his ever-wakeful sense of duty, he threw himself with a self-abandonment that took no account of the limitations of the powers of human endurance. And with all this there was no display, no metaphorical jostling of others out of his path, but a patient, self-restrained, almost stately movement towards his end. He had his times of stress and storm, but, however keenly he felt the pressure inwardly he made no sign, and his firm and imperturbable attitude carried him triumphantly through. Discouragement only braced him up to sterner effort to carry his point—and he carried it, no matter how long he had to wait. With all that strength of character, he was remarkably gentle and courteous of manner—not grudging to take trouble to oblige—shrinking from the very appearance of seeking to wound a sensitive nature. On one occasion at a little function at one of the schools, he gave an address at great discomfort and inconvenience to himself, owing to the infirm state of his health; and remembering afterwards that he had omitted a complimentary reference to the character of the teacher's work, he wrote a tenderly considerate letter explaining very fully how the omission had occurred.

Of Sir John Thurston, as of Sir Christopher Wren, it might well be said in Fiji, "Si quaeris

monumentum circumspice." You will find his monument in the humane and sagacious legislation of the statute-book ; in the political stability and financial soundness, in the industries and institutions of the Colony ; you will see it in the general contentment of the native race and in the growing prosperity of the great body of the settlers ; you will see it in the vast number of botanical treasures, many of them of high economic value—which he introduced into the Islands ; and in the practical solution of many of the grave difficulties that encumbered the Government on the Cession of Fiji to the British Crown.

There was, it has been said, no more potent personality among British Governors in the Southern Hemisphere than Sir John Thurston. He was responsible to no one but to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was content to leave him pretty much alone. He himself constituted a majority in his own Legislative Council, the sole deliberative body in the Colony over which he reigned, and as he could require its official members to vote by command, his sole will was virtually the law of the land.

He was recognized, was the testimony of the local press whose tone had been often hostile to him, as a capable and impartial administrator, and one who had the best interests of the Colony at

heart. The only difference he had with the Colonists was over the Native Policy. With this exception and the friction it engendered, the relations between Governor and governed were of the most cordial character.

Of special value to his Colony was his knowledge of botany and of the flora of tropical lands. His services to science procured him the distinction of F.R.G.S. and of F.L.S., and opened to him a voluminous correspondence with learned societies, in which he was always on the watch to advance the interests of Fiji. "He was," Sir William Des Voeux says, "a remarkable man. Born of a good family, his education had been mostly acquired after he had arrived at manhood, yet it was remarkably effective, so that, besides his unsurpassed knowledge of the islands of the Western Pacific and of the many singular incidents of their recent history, he had a large fund of general and instructive conversation, added to a natural humor which the vicissitudes of his life had been unable to quench. The Native Tax System of which he had charge and the ordinary work of his office was sufficient to occupy the whole of his time. He was always a hard worker. He had a huge correspondence—from 4,000 to 6,000 letters in the year.

The announcement of his death caused deep grief in Tonga and in the Pacific Islands. When Ratu

Lala, the Tui Thakaudrove, heard that his benefactor and friend had passed away, he was greatly troubled. Tui Thakau had given Lala when he was a mere child over to Sir John Thurston's care, and he had treated him as his own son, and carefully educated him for the high station which he was one day destined to fill. And now, after the custom of his country, and in order to testify his veneration and affection and high appreciation of him, who for upwards of twenty years had been as a father to him, he arranged with his people to hold what is known as a "Burua"—the observance of imposing mourning ceremonies; and far and wide through all the province over which he ruled, the invitations of Ratu Lala went—to all the chiefs of Thakaudrove, to many of the Lau Europeans in the same province, and to a large number of visitors and friends, invitations to the "Burua" were sent. On the 10th August, 1897, they assembled, a large and distinguished company, to see honour done to the memory of the man whom Ratu Lala had tenderly loved. It was an imposing public lamentation that made a powerful impression on those who witnessed it.

CHAPTER XL.

Forward Movements in Native Interests.

SIR JOHN THURSTON was succeeded in the administration of the Government of Fiji by Sir Geo. O'Brien, who arrived in July, 1897, and received a cordial welcome from the people. The Colony continued to make good progress, and, in the year 1899, its financial prosperity was indicated by the fact that the excess of revenue over expenditure was estimated to amount to £13,713. It was now felt that strenuous efforts should be made to arrest the decay of the native race. The sum of £11,700 was therefore appropriated with a view to taking measures to rescue them from impending extinction.

The Wesleyan Mission began a movement which aimed at reform in the home-life, by establishing a Girls' School at Ba, under the care of native teachers, through whom an effort was made to improve the tone and domestic habits of the women. But the best work in that direction,

according to the testimony of Sir Geo. O'Brien, was done by the Roman Catholic Sisters' Hygienic Mission, whose object was to endeavour to raise the status of the Fijian women—especially to inculcate and introduce among them cleanlier habits of living, "to get them to pay more attention to the proper rearing of their infants and young children, and to be less neglectful of the sick." The work of the Sisters was said to be deserving of all praise. They lived among the natives in constant contact with their life, cheerfully facing physical discomfort and hardship in order that by their daily example and teaching the Fijian women might be led to develop those finer traits of moral character in which they are at present so manifestly wanting. Their ministry was confined, Sir Geo. O'Brien deplored, by force of circumstances, in other words, by denominational animosities, to their own co-religionists.

The Government has applied itself vigorously to the removal, so far as is practicable, of the physical causes of depopulation. It is improving the existing means of communication—a matter of importance in a country in which the women are the toilers and the burden-bearers—and in providing a wholesome water supply for the people. A great many regulations have been framed by the Native Regulation Board, and resolutions passed by the various Provincial and District Councils which,

had they been carried into effect, would undoubtedly have promoted the welfare of the natives. But they were practically a dead letter owing to the mode of administration, which was solely through the chiefs. It was therefore decided to appoint four Provincial Inspectors at a cost not exceeding £2,000 for salaries and all allowances, "to see that the regulations are systematically carried out, and that practical effect is continuously given to such measures as may be devised for the improvement of village sanitation or otherwise, in the general interests of the natives."

We have seen above that certain intelligent native youths were selected to be taken through a medical course in order that they might be helpful to the sick. But despite the care lavished on their education by the Chief Medical Officer, the native medical practitioners, with hardly a single exception, turned out to be entirely useless for the purpose which they were intended to fulfil. It was believed that, "under immediate European supervision they might be utilized as dressers, but thrown upon their own resources, they almost invariably lapsed into inertia, drew their salaries, and converted their offices into sinecures." As competent medical treatment is an indispensable adjunct to the other remedial measures undertaken with a view to arresting the decrease of the native population, it was decided to erect three provincial

hospitals at Lautoka, Bua, and Mathuata, and to provide three provincial doctors to concern themselves with the public health.

The Colony also contributed to the School of Tropical Medicine, established in the Seamen's Hospital, Greenwich, in which medical men may receive a short course of instruction before proceeding to the Colonies, and where medical officers who may be visiting the Home-country on leave of absence, may have opportunity of extending their knowledge in order to the increase of their professional usefulness on their return to their own lands.

The chief hindrances in the way of the increase of native products and exports, and of the improvement of the material condition of the native population, Sir George O'Brien believed, were the absence of organization of native labour and the custom of "Kere-kere." In the year 1900 he therefore prepared a programme of labour for the Fijians, in order that they might know what time they had for the improvement of their own personal condition, after performing their communal obligations. He felt that there was a vast waste of time which might be profitably employed, that it was desirable to ascertain the requirements of the chiefs in the matter of "lala," to establish a practical check on those requirements, and to see that they

were exercised with a due regard to economy of labour.

Resolutions prohibiting "Kere-kere" of articles other than native food have been passed by many of the Provincial Councils. And, in order to the encouragement of industry, to stimulate individual exertion, the Governor arranged that the re-fund should be divided between those entitled to share in it in proportion to the contributions of each individual. Formerly the shares earned by the villagers in the several districts were divided between taxpayers in each village "per capita," irrespective of amount of produce contributed by each individual. In a copra producing district of Bua, when the European inspector of taxes announced to the people that the re-fund would in future be distributed in proportion to the amounts of individual contributions, the announcement was received by the majority with evident satisfaction, and one man called out, "Then I, for one, will make over half a ton of copra instead of two hundredweight"; and, as a matter of fact, he made seventeen hundredweight; and so with others. In the year 1900 the re-fund amounted to £18,694, as against the annual average of £8,344 for the previous decade. This happy result has been largely due to the wise policy adopted of using all means to develop individual energy and enterprise in the native race.

CHAPTER XLI.

Communism fatal to Life and Nationhood.

THE Colony still continued to move forward in the path of industrial and financial progress. In the year 1901 the Revenue amounted to £113,853; the Expenditure to £104,973, leaving a credit balance of £8,880. Sir George O'Brien, whose administration was marked by ability and a sincere desire to advance the best interests of the country, was succeeded by Sir Henry Jackson, who arrived in the year 1902. The actual receipts for that year amounted to £132,512, the highest recorded up to that time.

His Excellency lost no time in making himself acquainted with the conditions and requirements of the Colony, and with a clear-sighted statesmanship took such measures as could not fail to benefit all classes of the community. The year following his assumption of office he reduced the assessment of Native Taxation, for reasons stated above in the chapter dealing with the Native Taxation Scheme,

and he took action in other directions which may have the best results for all classes of the community. He opened correspondence with the Secretary of State with a view to the formation of a Department of Agriculture, which, he rightly conceived, would be of material assistance to the planters already settled in Fiji, and which would contribute to develop the resources and to promote the general prosperity of the country.

It was believed that Sir Henry Jackson was appointed to his office specially charged to inquire into the working of the Native System ; and one of the most important steps he took was to initiate, or rather to indicate the need of, a modification of that system on lines of the most approved policy in dealing with decadent native races.

The passing of the North American Indian and the decline of the Maori in New Zealand, have engaged serious attention and been the subject of patient research among humanitarians in both lands, and a gleam of light and hope for the future of those races comes from a new departure now proposed to be taken in the mode of dealing with them. Communism in land and wealth, it is now clearly recognized, is fatal to vigorous and successful life and nationhood, and the new policy that now commends itself to the friends of those races is to make every man owner of a plot of land,

encourage him to till the soil, and to become an active factor in the progress and prosperity of the community of which he forms a part.

Some such scheme Sir Henry Jackson seems to have had in mind when he said :—One most important object which the Government of Fiji should set before itself is the encouragement among the natives of a spirit of individual effort and self-reliance. Clear as this object is, it is equally clear that it cannot be attained at once, and that the communal system must continue for the present in its essential features, but with the steady intention of using it to educate the natives, so that it shall become less and less necessary to them. Violently to sweep away that system would be to produce social and political disaster, but its force may be weakened by encouraging a spirit of individual effort, and affording the people an opportunity of working for their own benefit, and securing to them the free possession of the results of their labours.

The utilization of the waste lands in such a way as to promote settlement, and develop the resources of the country, is now engaging the attention of the Government, and it is hoped that the natives who hold these lands will fall in with the proposals now made to them in their own interests, to turn them to profitable account.

An important step has been taken in making a change in the Constitution of the Colony. The difficulty of dealing with representation in Fiji lies in the fact that the white settlers are so sparsely scattered over wide areas, and that the mercantile and professional classes are chiefly centred in the towns of Suva and Levuka. Instead, therefore, of dividing the islands into electoral districts, it was decided by His Majesty's advisers to give separate representation to the different interests instead of to separate districts. The Constitution as amended therefore, provides that three members shall be elected to represent the commercial and professional interests, and three to represent the agricultural interests, while two native members will be selected by the Bose Vakaturanga from among its members to represent the native interests. The official members, it is provided, shall not be less than nine.

At the Imperial Conference held some time ago, in London, Mr. Seddon, Premier of New Zealand, proposed :—"That inquiry should be made by the Government into the condition of the natives of Fiji as to whether any modification or extension of the present system of government would be better adapted to the requirements of the Islands." In supporting his proposal, he made the extraordinary statement that the Colony of Fiji is managed for the benefit of a Company ; a statement which the Secretary of State emphatically denied, and firmly

rebuked. He expressed his surprise that Mr. Seddon should propose to inquire into the administration by the Colonial Office of a Colony that belongs to His Majesty's Government, and very properly ruled the business out of the sphere of the Conference.

Serious allegations concerning the administration of the Government of Fiji were made by Mr. Humphrey Berkeley who, among other things, asserted that the Fijian natives were being subjected to official tyranny and crushing taxation. Over and over again, such statements have been made by ill-informed and irresponsible persons. Major Marks testifies, on the other hand, that the vast majority of the European residents are perfectly satisfied with the present mode of government—and so are the natives. The Taxation amounts to twenty-four shillings per head, which is paid in kind, chiefly copra—a most moderate tax, and cheerfully enough paid by most of them. The Hon. W. L. Allardyce, Colonial Secretary and Treasurer of Fiji, most emphatically denied Mr. Berkeley's charges. Speaking, early in 1903, he said, Fiji was never more prosperous than at present. The output of sugar last year had been 40,000 tons. The copra industry ranked next in importance to sugar. The two other articles of export, green fruit (bananas and pine apples), and distilled spirits, also showed considerable increase.

The bulk of the trade, he said, was with the Commonwealth. The Colonial Sugar Company recently erected a new mill at Lautoko ; and, in 1902, a shipment of 5,000 tons of sugar was sent to Vancouver, thus opening up another market for the Company's products.

And when Sir H. M. Jackson was in Sydney, in November, 1903, on his way back to his seat of government, he spoke enthusiastically regarding the future of the Colony. Almost anything of a tropical or sub-tropical character, he said, could be produced there ; there were also large tracts of land suitable for stock-raising and cotton cultivation. The native chiefs had offered to hand over the whole of their waste lands in order that the country might be opened up for settlement ; and both white settlers and coolies were anxious to take these lands up. Sugar cultivation was also increasing enormously. The racial problem was unknown, coolies and natives keeping on the best of terms.

Sir Henry Jackson, after a brief term of office, has been succeeded by Sir E. F. Im Thurm, who, on an official visit which he made to Tonga at the close of last year, found large deficits in the public accounts, and had occasion to deport both the Premier and the Treasurer of the Kingdom to Fiji —an action which King George of Tonga resented,

and made formal application to His Majesty the King and the Colonial Secretary for their release.

Arrangements are now (March, 1909) being completed for the establishment of a direct steamship service between Melbourne and Fiji, which will bring the Colony into closer commercial relations with this State.

CHAPTER XLII.

"A Brilliant Future" before Fiji.

FIJI possesses a large area of wonderfully fertile soil that is hardly equalled, probably it is not surpassed, by any other tropical country in the world. Its deep alluvial deposits formed of valuable forest mould, its valleys and glens enriched by unceasing disintegration of volcanic mountain and rock, have been yielding annually crops of cane, cotton, maize, tobacco and other products without manure and without apparent impoverishment. It is estimated that there are upwards of a thousand square miles in the group suitable for growing sugar, and little more than the outermost fringe, as it were, of that vast area, has been brought under remunerative culture. The climate, though essentially tropical, is yet remarkably healthy. "It is perfect in every sense of the word," Sir William Macgregor testifies, "fever or malaria does not exist; indeed, I do not know of one case during the whole thirteen years of my residence there." Settlers and European

tradesmen can work in the open air constantly throughout the year, exposed to all changes of weather, without feeling any bad effects. The temperature rarely exceeds 90 degrees, and ranges between 55 and 60 degrees in July. The rainfall varies in different places, from about 70 or 80 inches to about twice that amount, and it is usually wonderfully evenly distributed over the year.

Fiji lies 1,760 miles N.E. of Sydney, and 1,175 miles North of Auckland. The Union Steamship Company, as well as other Australian and New Zealand boats sailing under other flags, have contributed in a high degree to the development of the Fiji trade. Seven or eight large steamers now call monthly at Suva, and the Colony now lies in the track of the world's busy life. It has been of very special advantage to its interests that it is included in the line of route of the Canadian-Australian mail boats.

No one is better qualified than Sir William Macgregor to form a correct judgment of the capabilities and outlook of the Colony, and his deliberately expressed conviction is that it has "a brilliant future" before it. Of course, whether that be a near or more remote realization will largely depend partly on the spirit in which the administration is carried on, and on the way in which

questions of vital importance to the best interests of the country are dealt with ; and partly, on the steady advance of settlement and the exhibition of a bold enterprise on the part of the Colonists.

It has been suggested that, in order to the development of the undoubtedly vast resources of the country, the Government should encourage the settlement of coloured races who would "conduct their own petite cultivation on the lines of intense culture." But it seems to me that the Colony is at too early a stage for that. Small cultivators, to succeed, must be able to place their products without cost of carriage, in large markets close at hand ; and these conditions of success do not at present obtain in Fiji. It requires only to liberalize the laws and classify the lands, putting a low and attractive upset price upon them ; and then make it widely known that there is a great Colony lying within a few days' sail of our own busy Australian ports where, with a climate that is beyond comparison healthful, regarded in the light of a tropical climate, there are, all unoccupied, millions of available acres splendidly fitted for the profitable cultivation of products for which the world's markets are always open ; and companies will be formed and capital subscribed to occupy those lands and turn them to the best account.

Subsidiary to this there might be a scheme in operation to plant small settlers—whether white or coloured—upon the land. The cost of plain living is not high on some of the islands. The hand of industry can always gather in the native forest not only edible roots and fruits, but also articles of marketable value. With a little knowledge easily obtained, india-rubber can be collected by a simple process from indigenous trees and turned without much difficulty into cash. Many of the Indian immigrants have settled down as traders and as growers or vendors of fruit. If all the coolies could be induced to surrender their right of a return passage to their own land in consideration of receiving a plot of ground on the expiration of their term of service, it would not only save to the Colony the large sum of money at present expended on return passages to India, but it would permanently settle in the country a hardy industrious and frugal people.

THE END.

H. THACKER, PRINTER, GEELONG.